



**Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of  
implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

**Report of the Expert Consultation  
New York, USA  
31 October – 3 November 2005**

**Organized by**

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the experts and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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## **I. Background**

1. The ten-

5. The Declaration also emphasized that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration further recognized that the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.

6. In 2006 the Commission on the Status of Women will hold its fiftieth session. The fiftieth session of the Commission provides a unique opportunity to identify ways to enhance implementation and to identify key issues to be addressed in the follow-up to the ten year review in the context of the discussion of its working methods and the development of its new multi-year programme of work from 2007.

7. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) organized an Expert Consultation on “Priorities in the follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” in New York, from 31 October to 3 November 2005 in order to identify priority issues in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The consultation is also expected to make a contribution to the preparations for the development of a multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women from 2007. The report which follows is the outcome of this consultation and presents the findings of its independent experts.

8. The Consultation was attended by invited representatives of regional and international networks from Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Africa and North America.

9. At the conclusion of the expert consultation, the experts were invited to present their findings at a panel attended by representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations on 3 November 2005 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

## **II. Organization of work**

### **A. Participation**

10. The Expert Consultation on “Priorities in follow-up to the ten-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” was attended by nine experts from different regions. Support to the experts was provided by representatives from DAW (see Annex I).

### **B. Documentation**

11. The documentation for the meeting consisted of:

- An Aide-Memoire prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women



### III. Identification of priority issues

We stress the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. We recognize that all individuals in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.

(Outcome document Millennium Summit, 2000)

16. During the expert consultation, a number of priorities and strategies were identified by the experts:

- Economic justice
- Women in armed conflict
- Women's human rights
- Access to information (access and use of)
- Sustainable development/environment.
- Human security
- Violence against women
- Women's health issues
- Gender mainstreaming and women in decision-making
- Citizenship
- Governance and democracy
- Poverty

17. One of the main challenges faced by the experts during the consultation was to prioritize these issues, recognizing that much had been achieved at a policy level and to identify strategies to address the problems arising as a result of the gaps between policy and practice/implementation.

18. Taking into consideration the specific experience of participants, the experts focused on the first four priorities. Human security, gender-mainstreaming and women in decision-making were considered cross-cutting themes across the priority areas. The focus on these four areas did not detract from the importance or priority of the other issues/strategies; rather these four areas represented the main areas of expertise and experience within the panel. The gender perspectives of environmental policy and degradation were considered important by the experts, particularly as the issues are relatively less developed in the Beijing Platform for Action. However, environment was considered as a cross-cutting issue in the Expert Consultation.

19. In this report, the experts assume a broad definition of human security although they did not have the time to explore all aspects of the complexities of the term. The experts felt strongly that human security must be related to the Beijing Platform for Action and must incorporate a non-militarized understanding of human security.

20. The experts recognised that the linkages between issues identified are critical to understanding the multi-layered and multi-faceted aspects of these issues and their impact on women. The priority issues identified are complex and cannot be adequately addressed or challenged without understanding the inter-connections and without placing them in a broader context.

21. For each identified priority, the panel made a number of recommendations and identified strategies to *accelerate* the full and effective implementation of the

### ***Localizing content***

26. The experts noted the importance of placing issues, challenges and strategies for change within local political and cultural contexts. The experts further noted that while issues are not necessarily specific to any one country or region, understanding them and developing appropriate strategies to address them requires consideration of local specificities.

### ***Use of Legal Systems and Judiciary***

27. The experts discussed the double-edged power of the legal system to both solve problems and to perpetuate inequality. The legal system could be used across a number of issues, and should include the use of both national and international legal systems and mechanisms.

### ***Indigenous knowledge and practice***

28. Although not sufficiently documented, experts noted that the use of traditional knowledge and practices have been effectively used to address several areas of concern for women, including in conflict areas to address health needs and ensure food security and sustainable societies and should be encouraged and supported. They noted that, when discussing indigenous and/or traditional practices, the usual assumption is that these are positive traditions and practices, particularly when they are discussed in conjunction with 'modern' practices being imposed or replacing them. The experts pointed out that not all traditions are good traditions and that it is important to make the distinction between 'beneficial' traditions and harmful ones.

### ***Gender mainstreaming***

29. The gender mainstreaming strategy is a prerequisite for the attainment of sustainable development, poverty reduction and peace and democracy. A number of persistent constraints hinder its implementation, including conceptual confusion and lack of real commitment. At the same time, knowledge exists on why gender mainstreaming hasn't worked and what elements are needed to make it work. Efforts should be made to commit to fully and effectively implementing gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve gender equality.

### ***Ongoing monitoring and evaluation***

30. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation was considered priority for measuring progress in relation to all policies, reforms and programmes.

### ***Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325***

31. The militarization of societies and the impact of armed conflict and its aftermath on women was repeatedly highlighted in the consultation. The specific targeting of women for attack as a method of warfare was discussed, as well as the continued absence of





vulnerable to job instability, low incomes without employee benefits, heavy workloads, long hours and hazardous working environments.

35. The



43. Governments should put in place the appropriate economic and legal policies to allow women to fully participate in economic activities at the local level and have equal access to benefits.
44. Governments should prioritize poverty reduction and implement strategies that are responsive to the specific needs of women.
45. Governments should evaluate and re-prioritize national budgets and curb military spending which diverts essential national resources from health, education, environmental protection and national needs, i.e. sectors which have a differential impact on women.
46. As 70 per cent of women are farmers and as women are 45.



59. Age is also a factor of war-time vulnerability. Though the numbers are not easily determined, it is estimated that there are about 300,000 child soldiers world wide. During the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, an estimated 70 per cent of the soldiers were under 18, and in Liberia,

64. The experts noted that not all traditional practices promoted the human rights and





79. Governments should sign and ratify the 1949 Geneva Refugee Convention. Governments and the United Nations should protect and assist internally displaced people (IDP), the majority of whom are women, since they do not fall within the scope of this Convention.

**C. Human**

84. Governments should remove all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate measures to ensure respect for the human rights of women.
85. Governments should ensure that human rights documents are disseminated and translated into local languages.
86. Emphasizing that all civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights of women should be fully implemented, this paper, calls attention to some specific rights that are not universally implemented:

***Personal Status and Laws and Citizenship***

87. Despite the fact that the majority of state parties have committed to and ratified most international instruments that call for equality and equity, women continue to face discrimination in status and in legislation. As a result, women have had major difficulties in exercising their fundamental rights.
88. For example, lack of citizenship is used by some governments to deny certain human rights, especially to women. Citizenship is a basic condition for the exercise of rights. However, in many countries, it is not granted on the same basis for women as for men. Often, only men can transfer their nationality to their children. In several countries, other constraints

### *Family Laws*

93. Article 16 of CEDAW requires states to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. It emphasizes that marriage and family rights must be granted, on the basis of equality between men and women, including the right to enter into marriage; the rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution; equal rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, and in matters relating to their children; etc.

94. Despite the fact that several States have committed to the provisions of article 16 (and many have reservations), they continue to have discriminatory family laws that prevent women from exercising their rights. These laws often deny women the autonomy to act on their own behalf in relation to economic transactions, property ownership, age of

99. Ten years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, violence against women remains a critical and under-addressed area of concern. The roots of violence against women stem from a patriarchal view of society which sees women as inferior to men. This hierarchy is often reflected in legislation and policies as well as in their implementation. Currently, for many people and societies domestic violence is considered a private matter that should not be addressed in the public sphere. This interpretation means that many states do not enact or implement legislation on domestic violence. The first steps in addressing violence against women should be removing discriminatory legislation and policies and educating girls and boys from an early stage to ensure a truly equal society.

100. Even in cases where violence against women is punishable by law, the criminal laws addressing violence against women are often discriminatory or enforced in a discriminatory way, and thus many victims do not refer to the law or the courts. Of the few cases that do enter the judicial system, they often end up examining the behaviour of the victim instead of that of the aggressor. For example, it is quite common to see victims of rape being blamed for the violence.

101. There are many challenges to developing public policies to prevent and punish violence against women. Many governments do not see violence against women as a priority area, partly because they under-estimate the negative consequences that this type of violence has on the person herself, on her family and on the whole community. Policy-makers need improved access to reliable statistics and they need to recognize and address prejudicial understandings about the problem. Where States do manage to design good public policies and programmes, they are often not accessible nor properly implemented.

### **Recommendations**

102. Governments should develop legislation on violence against women and

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### ***Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights***

107. The human rights of women also include the right to have control over and to decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.<sup>11</sup>

108. Sexual health and reproductive rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws and international instruments. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, the Platform for Action, reaffirm that reproductive rights should be based on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and the means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free from discrimination coercion and violence, as expressed in international human rights instruments.

109. The lack of reproductive rights for women is reflected in the high maternal mortality rates in many countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The experts considered that a possible reason for this is the low priority and subsequent limited resources (both human and financial) given to the health sector, especially for reproductive health and sexual health services. In addition, many health services are vulnerable to high costs following health sector reforms and/or privatization. The often resultant higher costs limit women and girls' access to services. In addition human2reproductiv8Tc 0.eprod



technical meetings, training and general technical assistance, beginning with top policy makers.

122. Governments should ensure that national demographic surveys use a rights-based approach which includes an unmet needs framework and that they should interview a cross-section of people, both young and unmarried people and not only married women.

123. Governments should ensure that providing information and full reproductive health services to young people within the primary health care system is a priority in promoting reproductive rights.

124. The United Nations, Governments and civil society should create a common regional and national monitoring system of the Beijing, Cairo and MDG objectives, with indicators agreed to by all stakeholders- government, nongovernmental organizations, the United Nations agencies, researchers and parliamentarians.

125. Governments should require annual monitoring and transparent reporting of budgets and expenditure by local government bodies and the auditor-general's office to ensure efficiency in resource use and progress in achievement of Beijing, Cairo and MDG goals.

126. The United Nations, Governments and civil society should ensure that designation of national focal points from within the government line ministries, (for example, Ministries of Health and Women's Empowerment) host regular annual forums in which regularly include presentation of government reports and dialogue with civil society on progress achieved on their agendas.

127. Governments should increase resources and technical assistance for the capacity building of politicians and government officials, including those in the remotest areas, in order to develop skills and commitment for working effectively as monitors of health services and women's rights.

128. Governments should ensure that Ministries of Health initiate a coordination mechanism for women's health and reproductive health and rights for information sharing and project coordination, with a senior cabinet minister convening the initiative and including all relevant line ministries.

129. The United Nations and Governments should introduce new momentum to revitalise implementations by creating Task Forces composed of governmental organizations, parliamentarians, researchers and civil society organization representatives to plan and monitor specific components in the National Plan on Women and the Reproductive Health and Rights Plan.

130. The United Nations and Governments should ensure that a national system for implementation of ICPD and Beijing agreements includes information and education dissemination up to the end-user level and establishment of an effective feedback loop involving the NGOs.

### ***Women human rights defenders***

131. There have been some achievements over the past years in regard to work on human rights defenders. Documentation on the violations against women human rights defenders and efforts to hold governments accountable has increased. The appointment of



and distribution of information reflects power in a society. It is important that information



150. Governments and civil society should start with human rights education as early on as possible. This education should be reflected, among other things, in school curricula but also in radio and TV programmes for children and youth, as well as in the content of more modern communication technologies.

151. Civil society, in partnership with governments, should promote exchange of good practices and lessons learnt from countries that have used media advertising and programming to improve the image of women. Good practices, including media campaigns that have successfully drawn attention to key issues such as violence against women, should be encouraged and rewarded.

152. Governments and/or civil society should introduce gender-sensitive training and programmes that reflect on how women are portrayed in society and the impact this has on women and men. Training should be at different levels and targeted to the different groups that play a role in defining women in public spaces (for example media, advertising).

153. Governments and/or civil society should train women in the use of new technologies, especially disadvantaged rural women, in order to give them access to information vital for the improvement of their livelihood. User-friendly software that addresses the reality and needs of rural and illiterate women should be invested in and developed.

## Annex I: List of participants

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- EC/PRABD/2005/EP.7      *“Priorities in follow-up to the term-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”*, prepared by Denise Hirao
- EC/PRABD/2005/EP.8      *“Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action”*  
prepared by Jeanne Henriquez
- EC/PRABD/2005/EP.9      *“Incorporating an Arab-Muslim perspective in the re-assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action”*, prepared by Dima Dabbous-Sensenig

## **Annex III**



**Tuesday, 1 November 2005**

**09:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m.                    General Summary of Key Points from Day 1 (Rapporteur)**

**Presentation 5**

Ms. Meagen S. Baldwin, Network Women in Development Europe (WIDE)

**Discussion**

**10:00a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

**Coffee break**

**10:30 a.m. -11:30 a.m.**

**Presentation 6**

Ms. Regina Birchem, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

**Discussion**

**11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Presentation 7**

Ms. Denise K. Hirao, Latin America and the Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women’s Rights (CLADEM)

**Discussion**

**12:30 p.m. – 02:00 p.m.**

**Lunch**

**02:00 p.m. – 03:00 p.m.**

**Presentation 8**

Ms. Jeanne D. Henriquez. Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

**Discussion**

**03:00 p.m. – 04:00 p.m.**

**Presentation 9**

Ms. Dima Dabbous-Sensenig, Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW)

**Discussion**

**04:00 p.m. – 04:30 p.m.**

**Coffee break**

**04:30 p.m. – 05:00 p.m.**

**Sum up Discussion**

**Wednesday, 2 November 2005**

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|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>09:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m.</b>  | <b>General Summary of Key Points from Day 2 (Rapporteur)</b><br><b>Brainstorming on Priority Issues</b> |
| <b>10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.</b> | <b>Coffee break</b>   |
| <b>10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.</b> | <b>Drafting Groups</b>  |
| <b>12:30 p.m. – 02:00 p.m.</b> | <b>Lunch</b>  |
| <b>02:00 p.m. – 04:00 p.m.</b> | <b>Drafting Groups</b><br>(including coffee break)  |
| <b>04:30 p.m. – 05:00 p.m.</b> | <b>Reporting back in Plenary</b>  |

**Thursday, 3 November 2005**

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Persistent gaps in all regions included low levels of women's representation in decision-making positions; stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices; and discrimination in employment, including occupational segregation and wage gaps. Violence against women, including domestic violence, was noted as a major challenge worldwide. In some regions, Governments noted disproportionately high poverty levels among women, and their insufficient access to or control of economic resources. Governments also noted the serious effects of conflict on women, particularly sexual violence. In many countries, women's health, including lack of access to reproductive health services and high levels of maternal mortality, continued to give cause for concern. Countries reported high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and trafficking in women and girls was of concern to many Governments.

There were two important learnings which emerged from the review and appraisal. Firstly that there is a huge gap between policy and practice which needs to be explicitly addressed as an urgent priority. And related to this, Government responses illustrated that attitudes towards the gender equality and empowerment of women among the general public and within Government bureaucracies have not changed at the same pace as policy, legal and institutional frameworks. Explicitly addressing persistent stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices is critical to the full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

Many Members States in their responses also recognized the critical role of NGOs in awareness-raising, advocacy, monitoring and programme delivery and called for

contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

The 2005 World Summit, held in New York last month, also reaffirmed that gender equality is essential to development, security, peace and that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Platform for Action is required for achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. It further emphasized that freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including the right to development, the rule of law, gender equality and market-oriented policies, and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies, are essential and mutually reinforcing.

In the Summit, Member States endorsed the importance of gender mainstreaming for achieving gender equality and undertook to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres. They called on the United Nations to take further steps in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the policies and decisions of the Organization.

The Summit further highlighted the importance of, and made specific commitments on, reproductive health; education; employment; human rights, including in particular inheritance and property rights and violence against women, including in the context of conflict and its aftermath; access to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology; representation in decision-making; and conflict prevention and resolution.

In the Summit Member States also emphasized the importance of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition to enhanced action to fully implementation MDG3, efforts will be needed to ensure that gender perspectives are fully incorporated into implementation and monitoring of all the Millennium Development Goals.

It is now essential to focus on directing attention and resources to accelerated and effective follow-up and action to ensure full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly. A critical element will be working quickly to build on the momentum of the review and appraisal process and the Declaration adopted by the Commission as well as the outcome of the 2005 World Summit to take full advantage of opportunities, at national, regional and at global level, for increasing attention to implementation.

The consultation provides an opportunity to share experiences and insights on enhancing implementation at national level, through identifying priority issues which will require attention in the follow-up to the ten-year review, outlining why these are critical for moving forward, and identifying the strategies required to address these priorities. It would also be useful to use your experiences from regional and sub-regional levels to identify what global policy development would be required in these areas.

The expert consultation has brought together representatives of networks which play a leading role in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. I am fully confident that the experience and learnings from your networks, together with your individual expertise from national, regional and global contexts, will provide important insights and guarantee the success of this consultation. I urge you to seize the opportunity provided to facilitate accelerated implementation at all levels. I wish you very productive discussions and an excellent outcome.

Thank you.