

Further Actions and Initiatives towards Gender Equality:  
Perspectives from the United Nations



line- ministries.

- Another area where progress had been reported was the participation of women in the economy through comprehensive national employment strategies, employment creation, and micro-credit and small business schemes. However, women's economic contributions to societies and families are still often unrecognized and undervalued, and women's productive work is all-too-often hampered by the differential burden of reproductive work on women that is often not shared by the male members of their households. Increasing numbers of women have been entering the workforce worldwide. This has led to the improvement in their income security and to their standing in society. In this respect, the positive impact of globalization has generated employment opportunities for women on an unprecedented scale. From all corners of the world, we hear of success stories of using micro-credit and microfinance to

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Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, and with contributions from 37 UN entities, developed a system-wide action plan for the years 2005-2007 for the



they are treated by state authorities as illegal migrants and criminals. The root causes of trafficking in women and girls, including poverty, displacement, discrimination and gender-based violence should be addressed.

Madam Chair,

Three decades of innovation, experience and activism since Mexico have shown that achieving the goal of gender equality is possible. Many practical steps have been developed to mainstream gender in policies and programmes, reduce gender inequalities in all spheres and empower women and enhance their contributions to peace and development. Yet gender inequality is deeply rooted in societal institutions, entrenched attitudes and roles. This goes beyond a piecemeal rectification of different aspects of inequality and requires a transformation in the way societies conceive and organize women's and men's roles, responsibilities and control over resources. It requires a fundamental transformation in the distribution of power, opportunities and outcomes for all men and women.

Recognizing the complexity of the tasks at hand, the world leaders at the 2005 World Summit Outcome in September reaffirmed that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly was an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals. Importantly, the Summit Outcome explicitly stated that *progress for women was progress for all*. The leaders of the world resolved to eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by:

1. eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education;
2. guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own property and housing;
3. ensuring equal access to reproductive health;
4. promoting women's equal access to labour markets, employment and labour protection;
5. ensuring equal access to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology;
6. eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls; and
7. Increasing women's representation in Government decision-making bodies.

Madam Chairperson.

While the continued reaffirmation of commitments to the advancement of women and to the elimination of gender-based discrimination is encouraging, the commitments contained in the Outcome Document are not new. What needs to be done in order to achieve gender equality is to translate the global commitments into policy at the national level and ensure that the policies are fully implemented. It is not enough to have *de jure*

equality. Women want *de facto* equality. The lofty ideals of the Beijing Platform ring hollow for a woman living in abject poverty, lacking access to education, employment, justice and healthcare; daily facing widespread violence and de facto discrimination and with no voice in local and national decision making.

What needs to be done by governments, international organizations, civil society or individuals in order to achieve these goals? The necessary commitments have been articulated. They need to be followed by action and all actors must be creative in seeking ways to translate these commitments into actions, taking into account the particular national contexts. Essential for this transformation are:

First, accountability – women need to hold Governments who have the primary responsibility for achieving gender equality, as well as all other stakeholders, accountable for the commitments made in international fora and on paper: it requires establishing a monitoring mechanism preferably at the Cabinet level; regular/periodic reporting to the national legislature on the implementation of commitments by the different ministries and national institutions; and performance evaluation.

Second, so-called *de facto* equality – women need to have the same opportunities as men in all spheres of life, including in the workplace, in education, in health care, in political participation, in decision-making, in the media, in the judiciary, in the police, in the military, in the sports, in the arts, in the sciences, in the culture, in the economy, in the environment, in the information and communication technologies, in the transport, in the housing, in the energy, in the water, in the food, in the clothing, in the recreation, in the leisure, in the tourism, in the travel, in the migration, in the diaspora, in the transnational, in the global, in the international, in the regional, in the local, in the national, in the sub-national, in the municipal, in the community, in the neighborhood, in the village, in the town, in the city, in the country, in the world.

Thank you for kind attention. I wish you all a productive and constructive discussion.

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