

Milestones in United Nations Support of Women's Rights

- 1945 – UN Charter became the first international legal document to affirm the equality of all human beings, referring specifically to “the equal rights of men and women”
- 1975 – First UN World Conference for the Advancement of Women took place in Mexico. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was born at this conference.
- 1979 – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the General Assembly.
- 1980 – Second World Conference on Women held in Copenhagen.
- 1985 – Third UN World Conference on Women held in Nairobi. 15,000 women from every region of the world celebrated a decade of efforts towards the advancement of women.
- 1992 – UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) recognizes the key role of women in the preservation and management of the environment.
- 1993 – World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna, integrates violence against women and other women's issues into the overall human rights agenda.
- 1995 – Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, adopts a Platform for Action.
- 2000 – UN General Assembly Special Session, "Women 2000: Gender, Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century." More than 180 nations gather to assess how far the world has come in achieving the goals of gender equality that were agreed upon in the Beijing Platform for Action.
 - UN Millennium Summit in New York is attended by over 150 world leaders who sign the Millennium Declaration and commit to adopting the Millennium Development Goals, including the goal to promote gender equality and empower women.

For more information, see: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw

Excerpts from the Beijing Declaration

1. We, the Governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women,
2. Gathered here in Beijing in September 1995, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations,
3. Determined to advance the goals of **equality, development and peace for all women everywhere** in the interest of all humanity,
4. Acknowledging the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances, honoring the women who paved the way and inspired by the hope present in the world's youth,
5. Recognize that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade but that **progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted** and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people,
6. Also recognize that **this situation is exacerbated by the increasing poverty** that is affecting the lives of the majority of the world's people, in particular women and children, with origins in both the national and international domains ...

We reaffirm our commitment to:

8. **The equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men ...**
9. **Ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; ...**
12. **The empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.**

We are convinced that:

13. **Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace;**
14. **Women's rights are human rights;**
15. **Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women, and a harmonious partnership between them are critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy;**
16. **Eradication of poverty** based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centered sustainable development;
17. **The explicit recognition and reaffirmation of the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to their empowerment;**
18. **Local, national, regional and global peace** is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels;
19. **It is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women; ...**

We are determined to: ...

25. **Encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality;**
26. **Promote women's economic independence**, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes uneconomic, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;
27. **Promote people-centered sustainable development**, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, life-long education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women;
28. **Take positive steps to ensure peace for the advancement of women and, recognizing the leading role that women have played in the peace movement, work actively towards general and complete disarmament** under strict and effective international control, and support negotiations on the conclusion, without delay, of a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which contributes to nuclear disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects;

29. **Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;**

30. **Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education;**

31. Promote and protect all human rights of women and girls;

32. **Intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people;**

33. Ensure respect for international law, including humanitarian law, in order to protect women and girls in particular;

34. Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process.

We are determined to:

35. **Ensure women's equal access to economic resources**, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls, including through the enhancement of their capacities to enjoy the benefits of equal access to these resources, inter alia, by means of international cooperation;

36. Ensure the success of the Platform for Action, which will require a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organizations and institutions at all levels. We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Equitable social development that recognizes empowering the poor, particularly women living in poverty, to utilize environmental resources sustainably is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. We also recognize that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice. The success of the Platform for Action will also require adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multilateral, bilateral and private sources for the advancement of women; financial resources to strengthen the capacity of national, sub regional, regional and international institutions; a commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy-making processes; and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women;

37. Ensure also the success of the Platform for Action in countries with economies in transition, which will require continued international cooperation and assistance;

38. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspectives reflected in all our policies and programmes. We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action.