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Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality
and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review

Bangkok, 17-20 November 2014

Report of the Conference

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I. Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

I. Preamble

1. *We, the Ministers and representatives of members and associate members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, assembled at the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review, held in Bangkok from 17 to 20 November 2014,*

2. *Reaffirming* the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,¹ adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and the outcomes of subsequent reviews, in particular that the advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are matters of human rights and a condition for social justice and therefore should not be seen only as women's issues, and that gender equality, the full realization of women's and girls' human rights and the empowerment of women and girls are prerequisites for inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development and just societies that accord personal, political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security to all peoples,

3. *Reaffirming also* the central importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women² for realizing substantive equality between all women and men in Asia and the Pacific by ensuring the implementation of measures to address discrimination against women and girls in all its forms and the equal access and opportunities of women and men in private, political and public life, encompassing education, health, marriage and family relations, nationality, property rights, employment, legislation and economic and social life,

4. *Reaffirming further* the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,³ the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,⁴ the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,⁵ and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights, which are deemed to be universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and of the equal rights of men and women in their diversity and emphasizing the responsibilities of all States to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind, such as sex, gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, marital status, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, birth, disability, HIV and AIDS, as well as occupational, migrant, legal or other status,

5. *Recalling*, where appropriate, the international covenants and conventions promoting the equal rights of all women and men, particularly the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial

¹ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378; and United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2131, No. 20378.

³ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

⁴ General Assembly resolution 48/104.

⁵ A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.

Discrimination,⁶ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,⁷ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,⁸ the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,⁹ the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families¹⁰ and International Labour Organization Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers,

6. *Recalling also* the Convention on the Rights of the Child,¹¹ and the arising obligation to respect and ensure the rights of girls without discrimination of any kind,

7. *Recalling further* the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹² and the requirement to take effective measures to ensure the continuing improvement of the economic and social conditions of indigenous women and girls, and full protection from all forms of discrimination and violence,

8. *Recalling* the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol,¹³ which devotes an article to the rights of women and girls with disabilities,

9. *Recalling also* the commitments of General Assembly resolutions 48/108, 49/161, 51/69, S-23/2, S-23/3, 55/71, 58/147, 59/167, 60/1, 62/134, 64/145, 66/128, 66/129, 66/130, 66/216, 66/288, 67/144, 67/148, 67/226, 68/137, 68/139, 68/146, 68/191 and 68/227 to realizing the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women,

10. *Recalling further* Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1612 (2005), 1820 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2117 (2013) and 2122 (2013), on women, peace and security, and the importance of ensuring the protection, rights and well-being of women and girls in all phases of conflict and in post-conflict settings, the equal participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, and in reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts, the inclusion of female ex-combatants in disarmament and demobilization programmes, the prosecution of those who commit crimes against women and girls and the requirement for reparations commensurate with the crimes inflicted on women and girls,

11. *Recognizing* that climate change and related impact have a range of implications felt most acutely by segments of the population already vulnerable owing to geography, sex, gender, indigenous or minority status, or disability,

⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 660, No. 9464.

⁷ General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI).

⁸ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex; United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 999, No. 14668; and General Assembly resolution 63/117, annex.

⁹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1465, No. 24841.

¹⁰ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2220, No. 39481.

¹¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531; United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2173, No. 27531; and United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2171, No. 27531.

¹² General Assembly resolution 61/295, annex.

¹³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2515, No. 44910; and United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2518, No. 44910.

12. *Noting* the outcomes of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which urged States to tackle critical remaining challenges to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through a transformative and comprehensive approach and called for gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights of women and girls to be reflected as a stand-alone goal and to be integrated in the targets and indicators of all goals of any new development framework,

13. *Acknowledging* regional commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific,¹⁴ the Bangkok Declaration for Beijing+15,¹⁵ the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific¹⁶ and Commission resolutions 157 (XXXI), 203 (XXXVI), 249 (XLII), 46/6, 51/7, 52/3, 53/2, 57/3, 61/10, 66/9, 67/9 and 69/13,

14. *Noting* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region,¹⁷ the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN,¹⁸ the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution,¹⁹ the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia,²⁰ the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration,²¹ the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012-2015),²² and the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality 2005 to 2015,²³

15. *Taking note* of the diversity of women and recognizing that gender-based discrimination occurs in and of itself and that it is often linked to other forms of inequality related to such factors as age, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, disability, class, social origin or occupation, as well as migrant, legal or other status, and that the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination can compound experiences of injustice, social marginalization and oppression,

16. *Recalling* that women engaged in the defence of human rights must be protected and that Governments have a duty to guarantee the full enjoyment of all rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by women working peacefully in a personal or organizational capacity for the promotion and protection of human rights,

¹⁴ E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.1.

¹⁵ E/ESCAP/66/14 and Corr.1 and 2.

¹⁶ Commission resolution 69/13, annex, appendix 1.

¹⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Jakarta, 30 June 2004.

¹⁸ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Bandar Seri Begawan, 9 October 2013.

¹⁹ South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Kathmandu, 5 January 2002.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Pacific Islands Forum, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 30 August 2012.

²² www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Pacific%20Regional%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Women%20Peace%20and%20Security%20Final%20and%20Approved.pdf.

²³ Second Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Women, Nadi, Fiji, 20 August 2004.

17. *Noting* that non-governmental organizations, women's organizations and centres for women's studies, feminist groups and women academics have played a catalytic role in the promotion of the human rights of women through grass-roots activities, networking and advocacy and need encouragement, support and access to information from Governments in order to carry out these activities,
18. *Affirming* that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is fundamental to achieving human rights and for equitable, gender-responsive, inclusive and sustainable development for the benefit of all persons and societies,
19. *Recognizing* the diversity of women in all societies and that the most disadvantaged women are in need of specific measures to improve their status and access to productive resources,
20. *Reaffirming* the critical and equal role of women and men in the family, a basic unit of society, and the consequent importance of promoting the well-being of both families and societies; and, as such, acknowledging that the upbringing of children requires the shared responsibility of parents, women and men, and society as a whole and that maternity, motherhood and parenting must not be a basis for discrimination nor restrict the full participation of women in society,
21. *Recognizing* the contribution of families to sustainable development, including the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals for all women and girls, and that gender equality and women's empowerment improve the well-being of both families and societies, and, as such, stress the need for elaborating and implementing family policies aimed at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and shared responsibilities between women and men in the family, and at enhancing the full participation of women in society, while being aware that in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist, as contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,
22. *Recognizing also* that, since 1995, significant progress has been made in Asia and the Pacific towards the realization of equality between women and men, girls and boys, across the multiple sectors and domains of individual, social, political and economic life,
23. *Acknowledging* that, despite the existence of multiple international and regional instruments for the promotion of equality between women and men, and notwithstanding the advances that have been made towards equality, discrimination and prejudice against and oppression of women and girls persists,
24. *Acknowledging also* that the goals set and commitments made in the Beijing Platform for Action have not been fully achieved and implemented across all 12 critical areas of concern, namely poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, the media, the environment and the girl child,
25. *Affirming* that full attainment of the goals, objectives and actions set out in the Beijing Platform for Action requires strengthening and reforming institutions, increasing financing, bolstering monitoring and evaluation, enhancing accountability, forging stronger partnerships and strengthening regional cooperation, also considering the differential situation of Asia-Pacific States, in particular the vulnerabilities faced by small island developing States and other countries at risk from climate change,

II. Renewing political commitment

26. *Reaffirm* our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the recommendations arising from subsequent reviews and lessons learned, and thereby commit to address the remaining implementation gaps and to address new and emerging challenges to and opportunities for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific;

27. *Condemn* all forms of discrimination against diverse groups of women and girls and commit to strengthening action and investment in addressing the multiple and overlapping forms of gender inequality, disempowerment and discrimination;

28. *Commit* to creating an enabling environment to empower and substantively improve the situation and status of all women and girls by addressing the social determinants and root causes of gender inequality, violence and discrimination, including through measures that expand the rights and opportunities of women and girls and measures that remove barriers to their full participation in social, economic and political life in accordance with, among others, the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as appropriate;

29. *Also commit* to initiating, developing, strengthening, monitoring, reforming, implementing and evaluating legislation, strategies, policies, programmes, rules and regulations, and budgets that support the empowerment of women and girls and the achievement of gender equality across Asia and the Pacific, encompassing all 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, along with emerging issues and challenges;

III. Consolidating gains in the Asia-Pacific region

30. *Recognize*, in recommitting to the objectives and actions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, that gains have been made in realizing gender equality and the empowerment of diverse groups of women and girls and that challenges remain in eliminating all forms of direct and indirect discrimination against women and girls, noting in particular the 12 critical areas of concern and challenges that have emerged since 1995;²⁴

Women and poverty

31. *Note with appreciation* overall reductions in the proportion of women and girls living in extreme poverty and improvements in food security for women and girls across Asia and the Pacific, related to, among other factors, the implementation of social protection measures, including employment, education and livelihood schemes that target women, and the introduction and enforcement of legislation that targets women and paves the way for equal rights, in accordance with national legislation, to inheritance for women and men and for girls and boys;

32. *Express concern*, however, at the persistent feminization of poverty, with an increase in the absolute number of individual women and girls living in hardship and surviving on \$1.25-\$2.00 per day and women and girls facing discrimination in and exclusion from ownership, equal and shared control,

²⁴ The basis of section III is findings from preliminary analysis of information provided by Governments through the Asia-Pacific regional survey of progress in implementation of the Platform for Action and through their national review reports.

and management, of land and other assets and access to economic resources, particularly in rural, remote, geographically isolated, hard-to-reach and depressed areas and among diverse and vulnerable groups of women and girls, including migrant women, indigenous women, women and girls with disabilities, widowed women and women heads of households, single women, divorced women, internally displaced women and girls and older women;

Education and training of women

33. *Acknowledge* significant progress in relation to primary school enrolment rates, which have reached gender parity in virtually all countries in Asia and the Pacific. We also acknowledge efforts across the region to increase the enrolment and retention of girls and women in secondary and tertiary education, and to increase rates of female literacy and participation in vocational training and career tracking;

34. *Express concern*, however, that, despite such gains, girls are more likely to be out of school than boys at the secondary level, females are less likely than males to continue their formal education and are more likely to be illiterate, and subject streaming on the basis of gender stereotypes persists, as does the reinforcement of discriminatory and prejudicial gender stereotypes in teaching curricula, among teachers and in textbooks, noting that the advancement of women and girls' education is not leading to improved economic outcomes;

Women and health

35. *Acknowledge* the substantial reductions in the maternal mortality ratio in Asia and the Pacific, which has declined by almost 62 per cent in the last two decades, and note increases in female life expectancy at birth, calorie intake and the provision of health services, including those pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;

36. *Note with concern*, however, that the overall incidence of maternal mortality in the region remains high, including among adolescents; that there is limited access to skilled birth attendants, prenatal and postnatal care, family planning services and information, and emergency obstetric and newborn care; and that inadequate management of complications arising from unsafe abortion continue to contribute to a significant proportion of maternal deaths, and that significant differentials persist in maternal mortality ratios in countries in the region. We also note the need for greater progress in relation to the respect, promotion and protection of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all, including access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, access to age-appropriate, comprehensive evidence-based education for human sexuality, and the removal of legal, structural, economic and social barriers, including considering the review and repeal of laws that punish women and girls who have undergone abortions. We further note the need to end child, early and forced marriage and unwanted pregnancies among women and girls in the region. We further note the need to halt the rise in new HIV infections among women and girls by addressing the sociocultural, economic and legal factors that contribute to vulnerability to infection, to strengthen awareness on HIV and to expand coverage of measures to prevent and treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, through scaling-up nationally driven, sustainable and comprehensive responses to achieve broad multisectoral coverage for prevention, treatment, care and support, with the full and active participation of people living with HIV, key populations and civil society, while ensuring confidentiality and informed consent. We also note the rise in non-communicable diseases among women and girls, and the need to ensure that universal health

services are accessible to all women and girls, regardless of their age, occupation, country of origin, socioeconomic, disability or other status;

Violence against women

37. *Applaud* the introduction of new and comprehensive legislation, policies, action plans and initiatives in many countries in the region to prevent violence against women and girls, to protect women and girls from multiple forms of violence, to provide a range of multisectoral services and support for survivors of violence and to prosecute perpetrators of violence;

38. *Express deep concern*, however, at the unacceptably high rates of all forms of violence against women and girls in the region, including sexual, gender-based, intimate-partner and ICT-related violence, among others; at the non-enforcement of laws, discriminatory legal provisions, delays and gender insensitivity in law enforcement; at the impunity experienced by some perpetrators of violence against women and girls; and at the targeting of specific groups of women, including single women, older women, indigenous women, vulnerable women, migrant women, widowed women, impoverished women, women and girls with disabilities, women living with HIV and AIDS, and sexually exploited women and girls; and at the particular forms of violence against women and girls, including female infanticide, honour crimes, child, early and forced marriage and labour, trafficking in women and girls, beating and killing of women accused of sorcery, dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices;

Women and armed conflict

39. *Acknowledge* efforts across the region to address the differential impact of armed conflict on women and girls, compared with men and boys, including nuclear testing and unexploded ordnances, and to reinforce the important and positive role of women in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and in the development and implementation of subregional and national action plans on women, peace and security, including conflict resolution and peacebuilding awareness-raising, education programmes, the provision of services to women and girls affected by armed conflict and long-term holistic support to and rehabilitation of women who have experienced armed conflict;

40. *Also acknowledge* that rape and sexual violence during armed conflict and war is a serious human rights violation, which has negative and long-term physical and psychological consequences on women and their families, and we note that women remain underrepresented in leadership and

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