

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

November 25 - December 10, 2009



Beijing +15 Overview and Regional Activities

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women

In September 1995, over 45,000 people converged on Beijing, China for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women¹ and the parallel NGO forum where women's rights advocates and government allies created what still stands as one of the most comprehensive and progressive UN documents to address the realities of women's lives. The resulting *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* identified twelve critical areas of concern (Women and poverty, Education and training of women, Women and health, Violence against women, Women and armed conflict, Women and the economy, Women in power and decision-making, Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, Human rights of women, Women and the media, Women and the environment, and The girl-child) and listed objectives and recommended actions to improve women's access to rights in these areas. Although the *Platform for Action* is not a legally binding document, it serves as a policy guide for governments, institutions, private businesses, and UN agencies, and establishes standards by which to judge policies and programs already in place. By adopting the *Platform for Action*, governments strongly committed themselves to addressing obstacles to the advancement and empowerment of women.

Since Beijing, a number of significant UN and government steps have been taken toward securing women's rights, including Goal 3 for Gender Equality in the Millennium Development Goals, the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 on Women, Peace & Security and SCR 1820 on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and more and better national laws to address violence against women. Activism by women's rights organizations and women human rights defenders at the local, national, regional, and international levels has been a primary catalyst for many of these positive developments in women's rights over the past few decades.

As the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted in his statement on the concluding day of the Fourth World Conference on Women:

"The commitments made in Beijing are not only the result of diplomatic negotiation. Behind them lies the strong and organized power of the women's movement. The entire continuum of global conferences and summits has been shaped by the growing influence, passion and intellectual conviction of the women's movement." (1996: 1)²

Despite this progress, implementation of these victories remains challenging. Civil society must continue to fulfill its watchdog role and demand that governments implement the commitments made in the *Platform for Action*, especially in the face of new and emerging challenges, such as the global financial crisis. For more information about the four specific demands on which CWGL is focusing its advocacy, see the "2009 Demands for Action" document included in the Take Action Kit.

What's happening for Beijing +15?

The 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly took place in 2000 to mark the 5th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing +5). At this session, governments adopted a political declaration and outcome document entitled "Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action."³ Again during a regular session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2005 (49th Session),

¹ The First World Conference on Women took place in 1975 in Mexico City, the Second convened in Copenhagen in 1980, and the Third was in Nairobi in 1985. For more information on the objectives of these World Conferences, visit: <http://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/gender.shtml>.

² Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. "Introduction: Translating the Momentum of Beijing into Action." *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*. United Nations, NY: Department of Public Information, 1996.

³ For more information about Beijing +5, visit <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm> (Official UN site) or <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/policy/beijing5special.html> (CWGL summary), or see CWGL's publications *Without Reservation: The Beijing Tribunal on Accountability for Women's Human Rights* <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/publications/without.pdf> and *Holding on to the Promise: Women's Human Rights and the Beijing +5 Review* <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/publications/holding.pdf>.

the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly were reviewed and appraised at a high-level plenary meeting open to all UN Member States and Observers (Beijing +10).⁴

With 2010 quickly approaching, women's organizations around the world are talking about activities for the 15th Anniversary of the Beijing Conference. There will not be a separate General Assembly - Special Session convened by the United Nations; however, the theme for the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be "Review and appraisal of the implementation of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action* and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly." In preparation for this review, the UN regional commissions are working with the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) to distribute and collect questionnaires from governments about their laws, policies and practices related to gender.

The regional commissions as well as women's organizations, coalitions, and networks are planning regional activities over the coming months to discuss achievements and setbacks regarding the twelve critical areas of concern as outlined in the Platform. In many of these meetings and conferences, an emphasis will also be placed on examining how the global financial crisis will impact achievements towards improving women's rights.

Below is a preliminary list of regional activities. As we continue to gather more information, this document will be updated and made available electronically on CWGL's website.

Regional Activities:

Africa Region

What: Monthly events organized by national focal points from June through November, culminating in a major event during the 2009 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign

When: June through December 10th, 2009

Where: Various African countries

Organized by: NGO Africa Regional Task Force; The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and the East African sub-Regional Support Initiative for Advancement of Women (EASSI) are taking lead roles in coordinating activities, but more organizations are also being identified as national focal points

Website: For more detailed explanation and contact information, see the International Women's Tribune Center GlobalNet #359: <http://www.iwtc.org/117.html>

What: Expert Group Meeting and Regional Ministerial Review Conference

When: October 26-30, 2009

Where: Banjul, The Gambia

Organized by: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Description: Five-day regional conference (3-day expert group meeting with representatives from governments, women's networks, NGOs, gender institutions, and experts followed by a two-day ministerial conference)

Website: <http://www.uneca.org>

Asia Region

What: 2009 Asia-Pacific NGO Forum on Beijing + 15 "Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future"

When: October 22-24, 2009

Where: Miriam College, Quezon City, Philippines

Registration: <http://apngo2009.mc.edu.ph/>

Organized by: Asia-Pacific Women's Watch (APWW)

Description: The NGO Forum will chronicle what civil society, especially the women's movement, has contributed towards the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. Participants will share stories and

⁴ For more information about Beijing +10, visit <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/49sess.htm> (Official UN site) or <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/policy/b10/index.html> (CWGL summary).

draw lessons from their experiences to develop methods for improving NGO actions and building social movements. During the forum, participants will also analyze new trends in the region and globally and explore how these impact on the condition and status of women. An expected output is the formulation of strategic objectives and recommended actions addressed to governments, the UN international organizations and donors, and civil society, including women's organizations.

Website: http://apwww.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3:program-of-the-2009-asia-pacific-ngo-forum-on-beijing-15-weaving-wisdom-confronting-crises-forging-the-future-draft&catid=2:ap-ngo-forum-15&Itemid=51

Additional Information: For more information on preparations for Beijing +15 in Asia and The Pacific, please visit <http://www.iwtc.org/gnets/361.html>.

What: High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting

When: November 16-18, 2009

Where: United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand

Organized by: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Website: <http://www.unescap.org>

Additional Information: At an expert meeting in May 2009, ESCAP members discussed the conceptual and organizational framework for the upcoming High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting on Beijing +15 to be held in November. Some of the papers from this Expert Group Meeting can be accessed from <http://www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/index.asp>. Government responses to the questionnaire are being posted here: http://www.unescap.org/ESID/GAD/Issues/Beijing+15/index_questionnaire.asp

Europe/CIS/North America Region

What: NGO Interactive Roundtables in conjunction with the UN-ECE Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting

When: October 30-31, 2009

Where: Maison des Associations, 15, rue des Savoises, 1204 Geneva, Switzerland

Organized by: NGO-CSW Geneva and CONGO

Description: Provisional agenda and NGO registration form can be downloaded from the NGO CSW Geneva website.

Website: <http://www.ngocsw-geneva.ch/>

Contact: ngocswgeneva@gmail.com

What: Regional Meeting for ECE member states (CEE, CIS, EU and North America)

When: November 2-3, 2009

Where: Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Organized by: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

Description: "The Meeting will address the following themes: (a) Regional review of progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; (b) Gender-sensitive economic policies in the context of the economic and financial crisis; (c) Gender and the corporate sector; (d) New partnerships, networks, and alliances for gender equality." For more information and documents, visit: <http://www.unece.org/gender/documents/Beijing+15/Documents.html>

Participants: The core group of participants will be representatives of relevant ministries of ECE member States. International organizations (UN and non-UN), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia throughout the region will be actively involved in the Meeting. NGOs with accreditation with the Economic and Social Council as well as other NGOs which were accredited at the Beijing Conference (1995) and subsequently at the ECE Beijing +5 and +10 reviews are automatically accredited to participate in the Meeting. Other NGOs wishing to participate must follow the accreditation procedure which is outlined on the ECE website: <http://www.unece.org/gender>.

Website: <http://www.unece.org>

Additional Information: Government responses to the questionnaire can be found here: http://www.unece.org/gender/National_Reports.html

Latin America & Caribbean Region

What: Conferencia Regional sobre la Mujer de América Latina y el Caribe / Regional Conference on Women

When: July, 2010

Where: Brasilia, Brazil

Organized by: Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) / Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

Additional Information: Government responses to the questionnaire can be found on the ECLAC website:

<http://www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/mujer/noticias/paginas/8/36338/P36338.xml&xsl=/mujer/tpl/pl8f.xsl&base=/mujer/tpl/top-bottom.xsl>

Western Asia / Middle East Region

What: Expert Group Meeting for the 15 Year Review of the Beijing Conference

When: October 19-20, 2009

Where: Beirut, Lebanon

Organized by: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Website: <http://www.escwa.org.lb>

Additional Information: ESCWA and the League of Arab States (LAS) are cooperating to draw up and issue the Arab regional report on Beijing +15

Other Activities:

NGO / United Nations

What: Global Beijing +15 NGO Forum for Women

When: February 27 - 28, 2010

Where: United Nations, New York City

Organized by: NGO CSW Committee

Website: <http://en.wordpress.com/tag/beijing-15/>

Special Event: Center for Women's Global Leadership

What: Public Symposium on the Human Rights of Women

When: Saturday, March 6, 2010

Where: New York City

Organized by: Center for Women's Global Leadership

Description: One-day symposium to celebrate the 20th anniversary of CWGL and the Center's change in leadership from Charlotte Bunch to Radhika Balakrishnan. The focus of the symposium will be the contributions of the women's human rights movement and how it has influenced the United Nations and other institutions through local and global feminist organizing and networking. The symposium will include sessions on issues of violence against women, leadership development and multi-generational concerns, women's human rights defenders, and economic rights and justice.

Website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/>