

# Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

## Analysis of the 12 Critical Areas of Concern for Discussion

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### POVERTY

1. Proposed Action: Economic policies and development strategies focusing on the feminization of poverty to address the unique needs of poor women.
2. Positive Steps: The US national poverty rate has decreased, and scholars and policy makers have recognized the growing feminization of poverty
3. Negative Steps: Women-headed households comprise 72% of those receiving rental housing assistance and 2/3 of those are below the poverty line
4. What is next? Strengthen state-based and community-based support systems for women in poverty to ensure food, shelter, and income generating possibilities for women in poverty.

### EDUCATION

1. Proposed Action: Must provide equal access to educational opportunities including literacy programs, vocational training, and life-long learning possibilities for all including women, especially those who live in poverty.
2. Positive steps: Education is recognized as a key to gender equality and the empowerment of women.
3. Negative steps: Women and girls still lag in math, science, and technology fields. Limited progress in mainstreaming women's contributions, perspectives, and history, and in eliminating sex-stereotyping in school curricula.
4. What is next? Need to provide for vocational and life-long learning programs especially to promote literacy and job skills. Programs need to be made sustainable through low-cost options that include child-care for students.

### HEALTH

1. Proposed Action: Need high-quality, affordable healthcare for women and children including preventive programming for reproductive health. Must promote research and disseminate information regarding women's health.
2. Positive steps: Recently, funds have been dedicated to researching women's health issues such as cervical and breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, and health care concerns for older women.
3. Negative steps: 21,000,000 women, 1 in 5, were uninsured in 2000.
4. What is next? Need to ensure that women and children are covered by health insurance; need to create sustainable public health campaigns to combat lifestyle illnesses. Must ensure that women have control over family size and the can utilize their right to choose the future of their families.

### VIOLENCE

1. Proposed Action: End all trafficking of women and violence against women. Encourage research on the causes of violence against women, its impact on society, and the effectiveness of preventive measures.
2. Positive steps: The Violence Against Women Act (signed into law in 2006) was signed into law and the Justice Department Office on Violence Against Women opened. The

Obama White House founded the White House Council on Women and Girls with one of the goals in the first year to find new ways to prevent violence against women.

3. Negative steps: There is still a culture of silence surrounding violence against women which keeps violence unreported and underreported.
4. What is next? Promote the gathering of accurate data on violence against women; need to institute more effective violence prevention campaigns

#### **ARMED CONFLICT**

1. Proposed Action: Military spending should be limited and alternative, non-violent conflict resolution strategies should be emphasized. Involve women as agents of peace.
2. Positive steps: Increased recognition of women's roles and perspectives; better interagency/departmental coordination on trafficking of women and children; increased gender-sensitive aid programs in conflict areas.
3. Negative steps: Since Beijing Platform for Action there has been an increase in military spending and US involvement in armed conflicts; US refusal to sign International Criminal Court statute which criminalizes sexual/gender violence; Senate failure to ratify Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
4. What is next? US should provide stronger international leadership to incorporate women's voices at all levels of decision making and implementation of conflict prevention, management, resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction, peace building and peacekeeping.

#### **ECONOMY**

1. Proposed Action: Economic independence should be ensured for women through the ready access to resources and business services, helping to expand women's networking possibilities, ending gender discrimination in the workplace, and encouraging harmony of work and family obligations for women.
2. Positive steps: The White House Council on Women and Girls is charged with improving women's economic security by ensuring that each of the agencies is working to directly improve the economic status of women and working with each agency to ensure that the administration evaluates and develops policies that establish a balance between work and family.
3. Negative steps: Gender perspectives are not adequately included in assessment and development of fair world trade policies. Women's labor force participation is now 50%, but women occupy 70% of minimum wage and part-time positions. Despite the '99 Equal Pay Initiative, on average women earn 76 cents on the dollar earned by men. Flexible and safe working conditions and benefits must be addressed.
4. What is next? Congress must revisit the equal pay initiative to ensure equal pay for equal work; must address gender perspectives in trade and the economy.

#### **POWER AND DECISION-MAKING**

1. Proposed Action: The rights to: take part in government, vote, access to public services, hold public office, form policy
2. Positive steps: dramatic increases in number of women in executive and judicial branches, many foreign countries have implemented measures to insure more female representation in government

3. Negative steps: sorely lacking more women representatives in the legislative branch, poor movement by government bodies and political parties to encourage women as government officials and political figures
4. What is next? Establish and enforce minimums for women in Congress and other branches of government, encourage women to run for public office and encourage women to higher levels of education

### **INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS**

1. Proposed Action: Establish government mechanisms to encourage the growth of women in the workplace, government, the equality between men and women (affirmative action), include gender perspective in every government action
2. Positive steps: many government councils and bodies have been established for the purpose of studying issues pertinent to women and relaying those to the correct government entities, promoting women's issues across agencies and within departments
3. Negative steps:
4. What is next? Continuation of building coalitions for women and about women's issues throughout the government, bureaucracy and advocacy community

### **HUMAN RIGHTS**

1. Proposed Action: Efforts to protect the human rights of women by putting into effect all human rights measures, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and domestic policies/compliance worldwide
2. Positive steps: Increased awareness of women's human rights issues, increased efforts to reduce human trafficking in women and girls, increased literacy and education among women, as well as asylum for gender-based violence
3. Negative steps: failure to pass CEDAW into legislation for over a decade, rights of women have been passed up in governments for issues of security repeatedly, when the issues are connected
4. What is next? Pass CEDAW into law around the world, enforce universal women's rights for endangered populations, encourage and protect women leaving domestically violent homes

### **MEDIA**

1. Proposed Action: Efforts to increase female participation in the media, access to the media and other forms of communication
2. Positive steps: increases in women working in the media, increases in the number of women with access to the media
3. Negative steps: unequal pay for women in the media, few women in positions of power and senior level jobs, recent drop in numbers of women and people of color in the media without government protections
4. What is next? Increased national government participation and regulation of the media's required employee standards

## **ENVIRONMENT**

1. Proposed Action: Getting more women involved in the decision-making process concerning the environment
2. Positive steps: established infrastructure to increase this participation
3. Negative steps: lack of data on women working in environment policy-making, women and children still are disproportionately affected by environmental changes
4. What is next? Data collection on environmental change effects on women and children, disbursement of that information and policies that reflect those findings

## **THE GIRL CHILD**

1. Proposed Action: Protecting children, especially girls, against forced labor, forced marriage, against the harmful wishes of the situation they may have been born into.
2. Positive steps: girls' issues coordinator in US Interagency Council on Women
3. Negative steps: the US has failed to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, worldwide inadequacy to meet the needs of the girl-child, spread of abstinence-only sexual education, and girls are not integrated into federal policies and are not differentiated from women and children
4. What is next? New laws distinguishing and highlighting the needs of girls, protections passed into laws worldwide concerning the sanctity and safety of girls, comprehensive sexual education and increased access to broader health protection and education