COMMITMENTS AND PROGRESS

A fifteen-year journey implementing the Beijing Platform for Action
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This publication has been made possible through the generous support of UNIFEM (now part of UN Women).

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## Contents

1. **Acronyms** .................................................................................................................. 7
2. **Introduction** ............................................................................................................... 9
3. **Section I: Beijing +15 in Pakistan** ........................................................................... 13
   1.1 **The Process** ......................................................................................................... 13
     - Weaving Wisdom: Where Are We Now? A National Survey
   1.2 **The National Consultation on Confronting Crises and Forging the Future** .... 14
     - Beijing +15: Pre and Post the Fourth World Conference on Women
     - Continuing the Journey: 1995-2000
     - 2000: The Beijing +5 Review
     - 2005: The Beijing +10 Review
     - 2010: The Beijing +15 Review
     - National Consultation ‘Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future’ Lahore, September 2009
     - Beyond Beijing +15
     - The Process and the Outcome of the National Consultation
4. **Section II: Asia Pacific NGO Forum on Beijing +15** .................................................. 39
   The Plenary Sessions
   The Pakistani Contingent: Through the Process and Feedback
5. **Section III: High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review the Regional Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action** .................. 43
6. **Section IV: South Asian Regional Consultation on Beijing +15 in Delhi, India** .... 47
7. **Section V: NGO Global Forum and the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, USA** ................................................................................. 49
8. **Section VI: National Meeting on Beijing +15: Moving Forward Together** .......... 53

### ANNEXURES:

<p>| Annex 1: | Template for the Survey on Activities in BPfA’s critical areas | 68 |
| Annex 2: | Practical Needs of Women | 69 |
| Annex 3: | Begum Nusrat Bhutto’s Address at International Women’s Year Moot | 70 |
| Annex 4: | Agenda of Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future: National Consultation on Beijing +15 | 74 |
| Annex 5: | List of Speakers | 75 |
| Annex 6: | Press Release | 76 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annex 7: List of Participants</th>
<th>77</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annex 8: Agenda of the APWW-NGO Forum, Manila</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 9: Keynote Address by Dr. Noeleen Heyzer (Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 10: List of Participants</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 11: Agenda of the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 12: Welcome Address by Dr. Noeleen Heyzer (Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of UNESCAP)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 13: Eliminating Gender-Based Violence: Lessons from Pakistan and Beyond (Presentation by Farida Shaheed)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 14: Bangkok Declaration for Beijing +15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 15: Highlights of Progress and Challenges in Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action: Good Practices, Obstacles and New Challenges</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 16: Press Release</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 17: List of Participants</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 18: Agenda of the South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15, Delhi</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 19: South Asia Statement adopted at the South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15 Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 20: List of Participants</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 22: Declaration on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 23: Asia Pacific Caucus Statement</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 24: Agenda of the National Meeting on Beijing +15: Moving Forward Together</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 25: Press Release</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>AJK</td>
<td>Azad Jammu and Kashmir</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>Anjuman Muzareen Punjab</td>
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<td>APDC</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Development Centre</td>
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<td>APWW</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Women’s Watch</td>
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<td>ASR</td>
<td>Applied Socio-Economic Research</td>
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<td>BfA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform for Action</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisation</td>
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<td>CCB</td>
<td>Citizen Community Board</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women CONGO Conference of NGOs</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>CSW</td>
<td>Commission on the Status of Women</td>
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<td>DAW</td>
<td>Division for the Advancement of Women</td>
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<td>FATA</td>
<td>Federally Administered Tribal Areas</td>
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<td>FWCW</td>
<td>Fourth World Conference on Women</td>
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<td>GB</td>
<td>Gilgit-Baltistan</td>
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<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Gender Equality Architecture Reform</td>
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<td>GMO</td>
<td>Genetically Modified Organism</td>
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<td>GRAP</td>
<td>Gender Reform Action Plan</td>
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<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millenium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MNA</td>
<td>Minister of National Assembly</td>
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<td>MPA</td>
<td>Minister of Provincial Assembly</td>
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<td>MOWD</td>
<td>Ministry of Women’s Development</td>
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<td>NAWO</td>
<td>National Alliance of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCSW</td>
<td>National Commission on the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
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<td>NFLS</td>
<td>Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women</td>
</tr>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non government organisation</td>
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<td>NIC</td>
<td>National Identity Card</td>
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<td>NPAs</td>
<td>National Plans of Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSAGI</td>
<td>Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>PEMRA</td>
<td>Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority</td>
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<td>PODA</td>
<td>Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy</td>
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<td>SAARC</td>
<td>The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
</tr>
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<td>SAPs</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programs</td>
</tr>
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<td>SAWW</td>
<td>South Asia Women’s Watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Shirkat Gah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>Union Council</td>
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<td>UNESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNGASS</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly Special Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN-INSTRAW</td>
<td>United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women</td>
</tr>
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<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
</tr>
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<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
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<td>WAF</td>
<td>Women’s Action Forum</td>
</tr>
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<td>WCW</td>
<td>World Conference on Women</td>
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<td>WEDO</td>
<td>Women’s Environment and Development Organisation</td>
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<td>WG</td>
<td>Working Group</td>
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<td>WIPSA</td>
<td>Women’s Initiative for Peace in South Asia</td>
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<td>WWHL</td>
<td>Women Workers Help Line</td>
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Introduction

The 15-year review of the Beijing Platform of Action in Pakistan was undertaken as a collaborative programme by Shirkat Gah Women’s Resource Centre and the ASR Resource Centre to bring together national, regional and international processes.

The Beijing Platform of Action for Equality, Development and Peace was adopted in 1995 at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women. This document served as a guideline through which a Manifesto and blueprint for the empowerment of women was presented. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) addresses twelve critical Areas of Concern from a women’s perspective with strategic objectives and proposed actions. It entails a sustained and long-term commitment from governments requiring them to develop national plans of action (NPAs). Structured within the framework of equality, development and peace, the NPAs are devised at national levels to create equality between men and women as a fundamental human right, to remove obstacles and to ensure women’s active participation in public and private spaces by making them equal partners in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

The process of reviewing the progress on the implementation of BPfA at a regional level has been an ongoing one. The continued and persistent lobbying and advocacy by women’s movements and civil society organisations of the Asia-Pacific region has been relentless. Despite these efforts, women and girls continue to face enormous challenges particularly in the sectors of health, education and agriculture. Democracies in distress, political crises, unstable governments, frequent military rule, a sharp rise in extremism, the violation of human rights with impunity, violence against women and discriminatory customary practices impact adversely on the security, livelihoods, displacement and well-being of women. Additionally, women now also have to contend with the consequences of inter and intra-state conflicts fuelled by globalised militarization. The vested interests of international finance agencies and UN bodies play a major role in impeding developmental endeavours. The combined forces of a market driven economy, the ecologically destructive activities of foreign corporations and climate change negatively affect sustainable development and nutritional security. Fifteen years after governments of the region committed to the BPfA the situation of women remains largely unchanged. In the face of these challenges, the women of the Asia-Pacific region stand united and demand of their respective governments equality of citizenship; policies and programmes focussed on sustainable development; security in the home and workplace; education and health facilities; livelihood security; political leadership and participation, and an end to conflicts in the region.

At the national level, Shirkat Gah and ASR have played a lead role in the Beijing Conference and the subsequent review processes. ASR’s involvement with UN World Conferences on Women goes back to the World Conference held in Nairobi in 1985. Along with their numerous local partners, both organisations continue to actively lobby and advocate for the Government of Pakistan to deliver on their commitments on the BPfA, the MDGS, CEDAW and other international instruments ensuring the progress of women.

Shirkat Gah Women’s Resource Centre – a leading women’s rights organisation and an NGO
in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations – has been closely involved in the Beijing process since the preparatory committee meetings of the UN and the drafting of Pakistan’s official National Report for Beijing in 1995. Shirkat Gah (SG) initiated and led the NGO Beijing +5 and Beijing +10 reviews. The former, through broad based consultations, resulted in the production of the *Pakistan NGO Review: Beijing +5*. SG also facilitated NGO delegations to South Asia and Asia Pacific NGO Forums, to UNCSW and UNGASS sessions and organized a wrap up meeting at the end of the process. At the time of Beijing +10 it produced *Women’s agenda in the UN: To Beijing and beyond* – a guide for taking forward the Beijing agenda, participated in Government of Pakistan consultations on Beijing +10 and co-authored the civil society report on Beijing +10 – *Pakistan Ten Years into the Beijing Platform for Action: A Civil Society Perspective on Some Critical Areas of Concern*.

In anticipation of the 54th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (February-March 2010) where the 15-year implementation of the BPfA was to be reviewed, SG got actively involved in the regional preparatory processes as a Steering Committee member of the Asia-Pacific Women’s Watch (APWW): the Asia Pacific NGO Forum in Manila organised by APWW, a High-level Intergovernmental Meeting in Bangkok and a South Asia Women’s Consultation held in Delhi hosted by the South Asia Women’s Watch (SAWW).

The ASR Resource Centre likewise is a leading women’s rights organization and has been involved at the national, regional and international processes since the 3rd World Conference in 1985. As a key member of the Asian Women’s movement it was involved in the preparation of the Asian NGO report and participated in CSO and UNESCAP planning processes. At the same time ASR was responsible for the alternative country report which was presented in the panel on Asian Feminism in Nairobi and in presentations in panel subthemes on media, publishing, alternative film, theoretical feminism and women and religion. In 1992, it came together with several women’s groups in the Asian and Pacific region to form the Asia-Pacific NGO Working Group which worked both with the UN processes and with the women’s movement towards the 4th World Conference to be held in Beijing in 1995. At the international level, ASR was involved in this capacity with the UN NGO preparations and with both the UNESCAP and NGO processes in the region. As a member of the NGO Working Group it was responsible for organizing the series of panels on Women and Politics and Women and Armed Conflict in the Asian and Pacific NGO Women and Development Forum in Manila in November 1993, and subsequently was a key player in the 2nd Ministerial meeting on women and development in Jakarta in June 1994, to lobby and work with the Asia Pacific Draft Plan of Action for the Fourth WCW.

At the national level, ASR took the lead and organized 46 workshops on various issues identified by the WCW mainly with CBOs, NGOs, women in the creative arts, writers, poets, media personnel, trade unionists, and those working within the educational system. This process which spanned over three years (pre, during and post Beijing) culminated in a National Pre-Beijing multidimensional conference with over 600 participants in the conference and over 2000 who came to the cultural activities. The post Beijing multidimensional conference held in October 1995 had 1200 participants with a further 3000 participating in the concurrent cultural events. ASR facilitated 25 participants to attend the WCW in Beijing and organized 4
workshops/plenary in its own capacity. Nighat Khan was the only Pakistani to be invited to make a presentation in the NGO Forum Plenary.

Nighat Khan was a member of the drafting committee of the National Report for the 3rd WCW in 1995 and ASR was a founding member of the Asia Pacific Women’s Watch and participated in regional meetings until 1998 and was involved in the Beijing +5 process and participated in the South Asian and Asian and Pacific in Nepal and Thailand respectively in 1999, and in the UN review in 2000.

**The Shirkat Gah/ASR Collaborative Programme 2009-2010**

Since both SG and ASR have played leading roles in UN processes especially with regard to the World Conference on Women it was decided that in the interests of being more dynamic and inclusive, they would work towards an integrated programme building on their individual and collective strengths. The decision was to make a collaborative proposal to integrate the regional and international processes with the national ones already being undertaken by them. This would ensure that there would be no duplication and there would be a direct linkage of the national with regional and international processes including consultation, both prior and post the UN review in New York in 2010.

Working towards strengthening the national and regional position on Beijing +15, ASR and Shirkat Gah formulated a programme for as wide a consultative process as possible to enable a collective reflection and review on the national implementation of Beijing commitments along with their intersections with other international agreements. With the objective of providing a comprehensive overview of the background of Beijing Conference to younger activists and new organisations, ASR and Shirkat Gah designed a prolonged process beginning with a nation-wide survey of civil society organisations encapsulating the achievements, challenges and emerging issues for the period 2004-09 and a two-day National Consultation of NGOs on B+15 (“Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future”) to organising delegations, to the APWW coordinated Asia Pacific NGO Forum in Manila (October 2009), the South Asia Women’s Watch organised consultation in New Delhi (December 2009), the NGO Forum and UN CSW meeting in New York (February 2010), and finally a wrap up meeting to share experiences and strategise for the future (March-April 2010). While UNIFEM (now part of UN Women) provided financial support for the international component of the meetings the national consultation and the wrap up meetings were organised by SG and ASR from their programme funds.

Special care was taken to ensure a mix of experienced and fresh activists in these delegations to ensure the participation of a cross section of women activists, members of CSOs/CBOs and youth from all four provinces as speakers/panellists, as members of drafting committees, plenary chairs and organisers of parallel workshops. A commemorative poster and report of the National Consultation were widely shared at these forums.

This report is a summary of the deliberations of the National Consultation, and of the experiences and outcomes of Manila, Delhi and New York forums, and attempts to take stock
of the achievements of women’s struggles for equality both at the global and the national levels. The objective is to provide a historical overview of the international processes for the recognition of women, their roles and rights that culminated in the Beijing Conference (1995), and the role and engagement of women activists as well as the government in these processes. The publication records milestones and identifies challenges that were identified during the 9 month journey that Shirkat Gah and ASR undertook together with a large cross section of women and men. More importantly, it is hoped that the publication provides younger women’s rights activists and feminists to see present struggles as a continuum that has spanned several decades. Furthermore, the report is a reflection on the roles and contributions of civil society towards meeting the objectives of BPfA; it reviews achievements, identifies gaps and obstacles, and proposes recommendations. This all-inclusive perspective consisting of collective inputs from diverse members of the civil society, in addition to contributing to the national review, will also hopefully assist in successfully mapping future strategies for women’s empowerment and inclusive development. The report also includes relevant appendixes that are integral to understanding the BPfA journey and provide at the same time reference points for larger understanding.

Khawar Mumtaz and Nighat Said Khan

2011
1.1. The Process

The Beijing +15 process in Pakistan followed the framework decided upon by APWW (June 2009) for the APNGO Forum, ‘Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises and Forging the Future’. It sought to highlight the important contributions of civil society organizations (led by women and men) and movements in meeting the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). The national review attempted to: reflect the interests, experiences and recommendations of a wider spectrum of the women’s movement; orient those not familiar with international agreements and processes; facilitate the participation of a representative group to the regional NGO and UN deliberations; share the results of consultations and the national report within a wider constituency; and, to develop a comprehensive and broad based plan of action based on ownership and collective programmes.

The review led by Shirkat Gah and ASR Resource Centre consisted of two major activities: a template based survey of NGOs to collect information about activities in BPfA’s critical areas and a two-day National Consultation in Lahore.

Weaving Wisdom: Where Are We Now? A National Survey

Early in 2009, Shirkat Gah conducted a survey of NGOs in order to get more direct information on the NGOs with particular emphasis on the key areas of concern in the BPfA. Gauged primarily from the template (see Annex 1) sent out to about 100 organisations over the past 5 years it was found that NGOs/CSOs across the country have been engaged in wide ranging activities from the grassroots to provincial and national levels addressing women’s needs specifically, and those of other marginalised groups generally. While most of NGO advocacy was on VAW and related legislation or excesses, the least number of activities were undertaken by CSOs/NGOs in the critical areas of environment, media, and institutional mechanisms.

The majority of NGOs focused upon addressing practical needs ranging from formal and informal education to healthcare, family planning, micro credit, legal aid, and studies to back advocacy campaigns (see Annex 2). Needs addressed by NGOs that fall within the framework of strategic needs included facilitation in getting women’s National Identity Cards made. NICs are essential for accessing government schemes, owning assets, participation in elections both as voters and contestants, and to avail other opportunities. Other areas with long term
implications were the provision of training of women elected representatives in local government; various advocacy efforts to challenge negative customary practices e.g. violence against women, killing in the name of honour; denial of choice in marriage, etc.; and advocacy for recognition of home-based workers and regularisation of their wages.

Perhaps the most significant development that gained momentum since the Beijing Conference in 1995 with tangible results was that of NGOs joining in campaigns by the women’s movement on critical issues and taking an active part in emerging social movements. This signifies the expansion of the women’s agenda to include broader societal change and women’s role in it and the realisation, in the words of an activist, that “women’s participation in other movements prevents us from slipping into isolation” (see Box 1 for details). Significant among social movements were: the peasant movement in Central Punjab for tenancy rights and against ejection from lands that the tenants had sharecropped for almost a century in which peasant women participated actively and emerged as leaders; the prolonged and successful lawyer’s movement to restore the independence of the judiciary and the Chief Justice; and the protests against religion based extremists (e.g. the clerics of Islamabad’s Red Mosque and the public flogging of a young woman in Swat).

1.2. The National Consultation on Confronting Crises and Forging the Future

A National Consultation held in September 2009 and attended by about 140 people representing a cross section of grassroots, provincial and national organisations from across the country

**Box 1: Some Campaigns by the Women’s Movement**

- The amendment to the discriminatory provisions of the Zina Enforcement of Hadd Ordinance 1979 (the infamous Hudood Ordinances that the women’s movement has campaigned against since 1981) through the enactment of the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006. Women had been victimised by the Hudood Ordinances since 1979 due to its lack of differentiation between rape and consensual sex and burdened with proving their innocence. Thousands of women had to suffer imprisonment under the said laws.
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2004, that acknowledged the practice of killing of women in the name of honour and made it a criminal offence.
- Inputs in the Domestic Violence Bill which was passed by the National Assembly (Lower House) making violence inside the home a criminal offence and covered domestic workers). The Bill was not tabled in the Senate (Upper House) and thus was allowed to lapse.
- Language contribution and advocacy on the Protection against Harassment at Workplace Bill 2009 which was adopted by the Parliament in January 2010.
- Campaigns against harmful customary practices such as offering girls in marriage to settle disputes and taking up of extreme cases like that of Mukhtaran Mai who was gang
focused in its two day deliberations on the current crises (Confronting Crises), and the continuous issues of education, health and the environment, and future directions (Forging the Future). It also recapped the 25 year process that preceded the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and the experiences of Pakistani women who had engaged with/participated in them (a number of women attending remembered the follow up to the Mexico conference and several had been at the Nairobi and following conferences).

Current/emerging crises were discussed in plenary sessions with high calibre presentations and analyses followed by discussions. The continuing issues were reviewed in working groups. Both days began with feminist poetry reading. A slide show documenting the contemporary women’s movement in the 80s and 90s was also part of the programme.

**Beijing +15: Pre and Post the Fourth World Conference on Women**

The Fourth World Conference on Women 1995, also referred to as the Beijing Conference where the Beijing Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace was adopted was the culmination of a formal process that spanned 20 years. The year 2010 that marked 15 years of FWCW is important as it also marks 30 years of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and a 10 year review of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The seeds of FWCW may be found in the 1972 United Nations General Assembly declaration as the International Women’s Year in 1995. The first World Conference on Women was

raped as a form of honor revenge on the verdict of an informal court (*panchayat*), acid burning, the Blasphemy Law etc.

- Campaigns on violence against women and accurate documentation.
- Mobilising women to contest local government elections; providing political education and awareness, and legal support where they were denied participation; highlighting exclusion of women from voting and contesting.
- Mobilization for women to apply for National Identity Cards – a prerequisite for all transactions in Pakistan including eligibility to vote and contest elections.
- Campaigns to give due recognition to the specificities of vulnerability as a result of natural disasters. This included women specific projects for support and rehabilitation; property titles etc. While some of this was fore grounded in the immediate aftermath, women have not been given equal rights in rehabilitation especially in the distribution of resources.
- Campaigns to address the specificities of women in conflict situations and to include their experiences in conflict resolution.
- Campaigns and mobilization for criminalizing extra judicial and parallel conflict resolution especially where they negatively impact on women.
- Campaigns and mobilization for equal rights of religious minorities especially, but not only, women. In the case of Hindu law there has been an active advocacy for Hindu Marriages to be documented by law.
organized in Mexico City (1975) with the objective of:

- expanding and accelerating measures to promote equality between men and women
- ensuring women’s full participation in development
- increasing women’s contribution towards the establishment of world peace

These decisions had momentous consequences as the International Women’s Year gave the UN a framework to promote women’s needs and views. It proved an excellent tool for accelerating the advancement of women leading to a series of conferences focusing on negotiating global policy documents for women as the lead up to the Beijing Conference in 1995.

1975 World Conference on Women: The first ever global inter governmental conference organized to address women’s issues from women’s perspectives adopted the World Action Plan crystallizing past and current long-term objectives of the women’s movement under the theme *Equality, Development and Peace*. The UN General Assembly endorsed the Plan, proclaimed the years 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women and scheduled a mid-decade conference to assess achievements and to specify objectives for the next 5 years.

The role of the Pakistan Government was integral to this process. As one of the first countries endorsing the call for the International Women’s Year and the First World Conference on Women in 1975, Begum Nusrat Bhutto personally undertook the responsibility of initiating a multilevel national process to highlight and foreground the importance of women in development and women’s rights. The Pakistani delegation to the Mexico conference led by Begum Nusrat Bhutto was honoured in being elected as a Vice President of the Conference. Begum Bhutto’s keynote address as Vice President continues to be the most political, radical and most articulate of all Pakistani Government inputs into UN processes. She raised key issues of the day and several that continue to be in focus such as global inequalities and world peace and in fact suggested then that women of the world should unite for peace since women ‘suffer the most from conflict’ a refrain that was taken up by the UN Security Council when it passed UN SCR 1325 (see Annex 3).

1980 World Conference on Women: The second Conference midway into the decade adopted the Programme of Action for the second half of the Decade and defined equality not only in the sense of legal equality, but also as equality of rights, responsibilities and opportunities for participation in development, both as beneficiaries and as active contributors. Although this was a period when women in Pakistan were particularly vulnerable as a result of the Islamization policies of General Zia ul Haq. The delegation was led by Ms. Gulzar Bano, Secretary of the Women’s Division.

1985 World Conference on Women: The third conference thoroughly assessed and evaluated the experiences gained, obstacles encountered, and the results achieved during the UN Decade for Women. While not all the objectives set forth in Mexico City (1975) had been achieved, there were significant results. A major achievement was the “mapping out” of the situation of the world’s women. An enormous wealth of information on the lives and conditions of women was collected and shared. Another pivotal step was revisiting the very concept of ‘development’ from women’s perspectives. While the Pakistani official delegation was weak the women’s
movement was well represented and several Pakistani activists were invited to speak at the NGO Forum.

The UN General Assembly endorsed the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (NFLS) and decided that world surveys on the role of women in development be carried out every five years. In 1990, the UN reviewed implementation of the Nairobi strategies and ECOSOC and UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) recommended a second review in 1995.

1995 Fourth World Conference on Women: The Beijing Conference (FWCW) was the most successful both in terms of participation and results. The official conference was attended by 189 government delegations – more than any other previous UN conference – and the most consistently followed up in terms of action by UN Member States. The FWCW reviewed progress on the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies and adopted the Beijing Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace (BPfA) that clearly states that “it is an agenda for women’s empowerment.” This official document has become the most important guideline document – a blueprint for empowering women the world over.

The BPfA consolidates all the decisions made by the preceding world conferences on women. The document introduces and assesses the global situation of women from a women’s perspective, and emphasizes the principle of “mainstreaming a gender perspective.” For each of the 12 critical areas of concern addressed (see Box 2), it outlines strategic objectives and proposed actions for achieving the goals.

In adopting the BPfA, governments committed themselves to:

- effective mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout their operations, policies, planning and decision-making
- gender impact assessments of government bills or political decisions on women and men respectively
- developing national plans of action for empowering women

The entire UN system affirmed its commitment to implement the BPfA in all its policies and programmes. The Beijing process was a very inclusive one in Pakistan. Supported by the Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, the Special Assistant to the PM, Shahnaz Wazir Ali (MNA), and

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Box 2: 12 Areas of Concern

1. Women and Poverty
2. Education and Training of Women
3. Women and Health
4. Violence Against Women
5. Women and Armed Conflict
6. Women and the Economy
7. Women in Power and Decision Making
8. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women
9. Human Rights of Women
10. Women and the Media
11. Women and the Environment
12. The Girl-Child¹

¹ Pakistan added a 13th area in its National Report for Beijing, ’Women with Disabilities’. Consequently Pakistan’s National Plan of Action for Women – A Twenty Year Perspective to implement the Beijing Platform also has 13 areas.
because of the policy of the then Federal Secretary of Ministry of Women Development and Youth Affairs, Salma Waheed, the government was very open and supportive of the inputs of the women’s movement at several levels. On the Secretary’s initiative, a joint Government-NGO National Report for the FWCW was produced and presented at the Conference in 1995. The donor agencies based in Islamabad also took an unprecedented and since then the only innovative and non competitive reprocess by pooling its resources for an integrated and autonomous programme for funding support. Participating donors set up a Multi donor Funding Unit and engaged Shagufta Alizai, from the NGO sector to handle the unit.

At the same time numerous preparatory events organised by NGOs created national awareness on the Beijing Platform, and its 12 identified areas of concern. Pakistan added the 13th area of concern (Women with Disabilities) for itself and included it in the Pakistan National Report for the 1995 Conference. The process brought diverse NGOs, individuals and experts on to a common platform on issues concerning women. Over 200 NGOs participated in the Conference NGO Forum from Pakistan (the largest number to have participated in a UN Conference to date). The official Pakistan delegation of 25 persons included a large number of NGOs which facilitated communication between the official delegation and women’s groups and NGOs. The official delegation was led by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto who had also been invited as one of the three keynote speakers for the UN Conference.

**Continuing the Journey: 1995-2000**

Following the Conference, Pakistan’s NPA was developed through an unprecedented collaborative process between the Government and NGOs. It was finalised and adopted in 1998 and continued to provide the framework for women’s development and empowerment programmes and initiatives to present times and is only now going through a revision. Other structural changes in the administrative system were also introduced (e.g. Beijing Follow-up Unit in each province, focal points in each ministry, etc.).

At the regional level, the former Asia Pacific NGO Working Group for the 4th WCW reconstituted itself as the Asia Pacific Women’s Watch, as a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action. As a member of the Working Group the ASR Resource Centre was a founder member of the APWW and remained active as a member of the

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1 For details on lead up to and follow-up of the FWCW, see Farida Shaheed and Insha Hamdani, *Women’s Agenda in the UN: To Beijing and Beyond*. Shirkat Gah, Lahore (2004).
Steering Committee until 1997 when it withdrew to concentrate on the area of Women and Armed Conflict. Shirkat Gah played a more decisive role in working with the Ministry of Women’s Development (MOWD) in formulating the National Plan of Action and joined APWW as an active member of the Steering Committee.

While at the national level both SG and ASR were involved in several areas identified in the BPfA, ASR focused primarily on Women and Armed Conflict; Human Rights; Education and Training; and Violence Against Women, and Shirkat Gah intensified its focus on Women and the Environment; Health; Violence Against Women and Institutional Mechanisms, while both organisations were also engaged in other issues identified.

2000: The Beijing +5 Review

The Beijing Conference was followed by a five-year review process whereby each country reported progress on a UN defined framework. The official review process started late in Pakistan. Shirkat Gah was connected to the international NGO review process and took the lead in coordinating the in-country NGO review process and took the lead in coordinating the in-country NGO review (through funds generated for this purpose through multiple donors). It organised four broad-based provincial consultations based on the UN questionnaire sent out to governments for assessing each of the 12 critical areas as well as Pakistan’s 13th (Women in Disabilities). Two hundred and twenty-two representatives of 83 NGOs, CBOs, networks and government representatives participated in these. The results were compiled in a NGO National Report that identified cross cutting themes, and priority areas. The Report was submitted to CONGO for inclusion in the Alternate Global NGO Report and was also selected as an “exemplary” report by the Asia Pacific Development Centre (APDC).3

ASR was invited to the SAARC Inter Ministerial Meeting held in Delhi, India, in 1996. The Pakistan Government delegation proposed that the chapter on Women and Armed Conflict deserved special attention especially in South Asia and recommended that a SAARC Women and Peace Forum be constituted. In the first instance it was proposed that a SAARC NGO group would be set up which would be facilitated by the Governments to ensure that governments work towards a peaceful South Asia and to foreground the impact of conflict on women. ASR was given the responsibility to coordinate this and to bring together the first meeting of South Asian Women’s Groups which was to be held in Pakistan with the active support of the Government of Pakistan in terms of facilitating visas and travel. ASR, however, continued to work towards a South Asian Women and Peace initiative, which resulted in two concurrent streams: The ‘Women’s Initiative for Peace in South Asia’ (WIPSA) for peace missions across borders and the ‘South Asian Women’s Institute for Peace Advocacy and Research’ which reconstituted themselves as the South Asian Women for Peace. ASR played a lead role in the process towards UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security at the national, regional and international level.

Pakistani NGOs participated in the sub-regional South Asia meeting in Nepal (August 1999); in the Asia Pacific Regional NGO Symposium in Thailand (August/September 1999); UNESCAP

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Intergovernmental Meeting in Bangkok (October 1999); the Final Prep Com in New York (Feb-March 2000) and the UN General Assembly (UNGASS) special session for B+5 review in New York (June 2000). Asia Pacific Women’s Watch (APWW) was one of the 5 NGO networks that made a statement at the session. Major international meetings were followed by NGO consultations at the national level as part of Shirkat Gah’s coordination responsibility. A positive and significant outcome of the process was the creation of a strong NGO network at the sub-regional, regional and global level and the formation of South Asia Women’s Watch (SAWW).

Box 4: UNGASS Outcome Document — Critical Issues

- “Honour killing” and forced marriages
- Gender budgeting
- Negative impact of globalisation on women
- Women’s unequal access to social protection and participation in macro-economic decision-making
- Women’s right to housing, inheritance and property

2005: The Beijing +10 Review

There was no systematic review process among NGOs or the government in Pakistan. The MOWD, however, did organise a Government-NGO dialogue in January 2005 which resulted in a “partial” NGO review. Officially, Pakistan did not respond to the UN questionnaire or submit a national report. The interest globally was low key in part due to the redirected focus of UN member states on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see Box 5) and the MDG Summit which was also due in summer 2005. While the MDGs met the NGO demand for time bound measurable targets and specific indicators to assess progress and commitments, they were not seen as adequately addressing the roots of the problems but as having a narrower focus, and as falling short of incorporating human/women’s rights framework as well as political analysis. They also have no reporting requirement for the developed world’s commitments (Goal 8).

Notwithstanding the lukewarm interest of governments, NGOs critically reviewed achievements of the BPfA after 10 years. SAWW held a well attended South Asian review meeting in 2004; APWW organised the Asia Pacific NGO Forum (2004); WEDO initiated a global review which included Pakistan (2003); and perhaps the most significant -- the initiative of the global women’s movement to re-examine the women’s situation from the perspective of global forces. Beginning at the UN CSW session in Feb 2003 the process...

5. For a detailed report see Fatima Raja, Beijing 10 Years On. Shirkat Gah, Lahore (2005).
culminated in a Feminist Strategy (see Box 6 for details).\(^8\) The Strategy suggested not to open the agreed BPfA but take on board new issues, link MDGs to the women’s agenda, refocus on patriarchy and to factor in major developments like globalisation, militarism and extremism as deeply interconnected to women’s equality and empowerment. The Strategy identified the interlocking forces/obstacles that affect implementation of BPfA and also the alternatives to the obstacles.

Among official processes were: the 49th session of CSW (Feb/March 2005); UNESCAP High Level meeting (Sept 2004) where 300 government and NGOs participated; and SAARC Ministerial Conference which resulted in the Islamabad Declaration (May 2005).

**2010: The Beijing +15 Review**

APWW took the initiative in June 2010 to start the 15-year review process and proposed the assessment under the broad theme of *Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future*. Shirkat Gah, as a member of APWW, suggested the national review be undertaken within this

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Box 5: Millennium Development Goals

**8 Goals with specific ‘targets’ to be achieved by 2015:**

1. Halve extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Empower women and promote equality between women and men
4. Reduce under-five mortality by two thirds
5. Reduce maternal mortality by three quarters
6. Reverse the spread of diseases, especially HIV/AIDS and malaria
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Create a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade and debt relief

Box 6: Feminist Strategy

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Alternatives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Globalisation/neo-liberalisation</td>
<td>Economic and social justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundamentalism and extremism</td>
<td>Open secular/spiritual spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militarism and imperialism</td>
<td>Peace and democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchy/all forms of discrimination</td>
<td>Women’s rights and equality for all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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\(^8\) See op. cit. Raja, pp 20-21.
framework. ASR and Shirkat Gah jointly developed the proposal for a comprehensive process which was supported in part by UNIFEM and supplemented by the two organisations’ self generated programme funds. Recognising that the Beijing process gave women a voice and that every woman’s voice is important the process sought to engage a broad cross section of women from across generations through the national to the regional and the global processes.\textsuperscript{9}

The programme envisaged a national consultation prior to the international processes so that international processes would be as inclusive as possible; participating in the Asia-Pacific NGO Forum in the Philippines; the South Asian Forum in India; and the UN Review in New York. This was followed by a national debriefing and a discussion on future concerns and strategies.

\textbf{National Consultation ‘Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future’ Lahore, September 2009}

The four crises identified through discussions before the National Consultation were those arising out of a) poverty (rural and urban); b) democracy, where principle issues identified were of centralization vs. de-centralization, of upholding principles of participation, transparency, and accountability; of ending discrimination based on differences of class, caste, sex and as minorities; and of ensuring the continuation of women’s participation in local government; c) conflict and its implications for women; and d) violence against women. Different aspects of these were discussed in four plenary sessions through formal presentations and open discussions (see Annex 4 for agenda and Annex 5 for a list of speakers).

\textbf{a) Poverty, Environment and the Economy: Agriculture, Rural Economy and Women}

Food insecurity is a major crisis that intersects with poverty, environment and the economy. In 2008 the number of hungry in Pakistan rose from 60 million in 2007 to 77 million. Land distribution in Pakistan is extremely skewed as feudalism was never abolished, thus only 5% of agricultural households own 64% of the farmland. Over 80% of Pakistani farmers own less than 5 acres of land and women’s share of ownership of land is less than 2%. According to ILO estimates, of the 67.5% of the country’s rural population (living in 48,066 villages) 14% are landless tenants and 1.6 million are bonded labour. Women form 70% of rural workers but have no control over their earnings as usually men collect all or most of their earnings. Large landowners benefit from credit facilities receiving 42% of formal loans while the landless and subsistence farmers cannot access any.

Every day, approximately 500 acres of farmland is swallowed up by urbanisation (1 acre of fertile farmland lost every 5 minutes) as the rural poor displaced by degrading land migrate. About 40% of irrigated cropland (producing 90% of farm output) suffers from water logging and about 100,000 acres of productive land is damaged by salinity every year (due to water

\textsuperscript{9} A background to the collaboration between SG and ASR with regard to this programme is given in the introduction.
course seepage during transmission of up to 40%.

Dams are built to fulfil the three times more water requirement of chemical agriculture and have exacerbated salinity and water logging.

The Green Revolution introduced in Pakistan in the 60s couldn’t survive after producing high yields in the initial years leaving in its wake great damage; indigenous biodiversity has almost been wiped out by monoculture and patents. An estimated 800,000 farm families have been displaced; the cycle of debt has accelerated – poverty rose, hunger and mass migrations followed. At the same time indigenous seed foundation was also destroyed by substituting natural manure with chemicals and using artificially created seeds. The farmer became dependent on the company that sold seeds, was stopped from saving his own seeds and the livelihood of those who saved seeds was taken away. Currently unqualified seed companies operate without proper regulation and multinational seed companies (Monsanto, Dupont, ICI, etc.) sell their Genetically Modified seeds with impunity. Similarly, there are no rules on limits for pesticide use or ensuring their quality; multinational corporations import or manufacture pesticides and sell them through franchises.

Poverty means that peasants cannot afford proper silos which are key to preservation and fair prices and 30-40% perishables are lost at post-harvest stage. Storage methods are primitive and unsuitable for bulk production. While this is avoidable, governments don’t help. In addition, government policy is to promote crops for export rather than focus on the small farmer and sustainable agriculture that ensures food security of the poor. Thus more land is devoted to cash crops instead of domestic food needs. Even food grains are exported creating food scarcity at home. The recent move (initiated under General Musharraf’s regime) is to lease out large tracts of agricultural land (7 million acres) to Saudi Arabia and Gulf states.

The policies promoted/imposed by international financial institutions – World Bank, IMF and in more recent times the WTO – have contributed to the food crisis, the rapid degradation of soils and environment and the resultant spiralling poverty in the country. Their allies have been the country’s political and economic elite.

The UN has warned that unless the world turns back to organic/natural agriculture, it will be

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**Recommendations**

Given that women bear the principle responsibility for household food needs, it is recommended that for achieving full food security:

- **Women-centred land reforms on usufruct terms be introduced.**
- **Give every woman in a poor rural household 2-5 acres of land for self-managed organic agriculture backed with appropriate extension and support services.**
- **The 7 million acres state land set aside for leasing to foreign governments be given to women instead to secure livelihood for 2 to 4 million farm families with surplus for exports, removal of foreign dependency and women’s empowerment to raise their status in society.**
- **Restrict building of big dams as they deprive downstream lands of much needed water.**
- **End commercialisation of deep sea fishing which has lead to the loss of livelihood of scores of women.**

*Intense discussions on each of the crises concluded with a comprehensive set of recommendations, except on conflicts whose complex dimensions and intertwining between internal and external forces and political contestations were identified, but given their ongoing nature did not elicit many immediate recommendations. These recommendations form the bases of future advocacy.*
faced with a food and agricultural catastrophe. Pakistan is already facing it. However, experts agree that most degraded land can be restored through organic farming in 3-5 years. Negative effects of global warming/climate change can also be mitigated by replacing industrial chemical agriculture with organic farming.

b) **Poverty: Women in the Urban Formal and Informal Economy and Home Based Workers**

Liberalization of Pakistan’s economy in 1990 through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) entailed privatization, deindustrialization, trade liberalization, high inflation and export-led growth with serious implications on the working class. Women form a significant portion of urban economy with 60.2% of the women work force engaged in ‘crafts and related trades’ compared to 0.3% as ‘plant and machine operators.’ Women’s participation in the formal labour force is 20% of the total labour force (Labour Force Survey 2008) with a concentration of women workers in low-skilled, low-tiered jobs in the manufacturing sector and their almost total lack of access to technical skills. The trend in women as unpaid family workers is rising and is said to be at 65% including women in the agriculture sector. Education levels among women are low and 62% live in *katchi abadis* (urban squatter settlements).

The informal sector employs 67.5% of women in urban areas in diverse manufacturing enterprises in Export Processing Zones or small factories (textiles, light engineering, plastic, chemicals, leather products, food processing), domestic employment on extremely low wages, and home-based piece rate work. The latter engages 70% of the informal sector women (8.2 million according to the World Bank) paying them exploitative wages. The lifting of subsidies from various goods and cut on social expenditures under SAPs has enhanced poverty with the process of privatization alone having resulted in thousands of workers losing

<table>
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<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>The following rights of women workers require promotion and protection through the consolidation of Labour Laws:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The right to organise and to bargain collectively and be recognised and facilitated regardless of their being in the formal or informal sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The right of organizations of home workers to join trade union federations or confederations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expedite protection from sexual harassment and gender based discrimination at the work place legislation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expeditiously adopt the draft policy and legislation for Home Based Workers prepared by NGOs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adopt the UN Home Based Convention Application C-177 1996 which provides for the right to organize and bargain collectively, removal of legislative or administrative restrictions or other obstacles to this right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ratify ILO Conventions and implement those ratified: Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and the Right to Organise); Convention 98 (The Right to Organise and Bargain Collectively); Convention 29 (Forced Labour); Convention 105 (Abolition of Forced Labour); Convention 100 (Equal Remuneration); Convention 111 (Discrimination in Employment and Occupation); Convention 138 (Minimum Age Convention).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fix minimum rates of wages for home based work.</td>
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their jobs over the decade. Export led growth has diverted investment away from the production of goods particularly food, shelter, clothing and transport and the market has failed to support the concerns of the poor. Hence, the clustering of women in the informal economy where there are no laws or policies to define or ensure their rights.

Home based workers are among the poorest, are usually unprotected due to non visibility, remain unacknowledged and unregulated, and are confined due to social restrictions and work to supplement family income to meet basic needs when male earning members become unemployed. Isolated and divided they have minimal bargaining power or organization capacity. The work they do is often hazardous and is the lowest in the value chain. Given their low level of income home based workers have less say in household decision making, or independence in spending the money they earn.

National labour legislation for both the formal and informal sectors lacks gender sensitivity; the data too is not gender segregated. Across all industry divisions and all occupations, the average Pakistani woman is getting paid 3.6 times less than an average male worker. There is no female lawyer in labour courts; no female judge/presiding officer (except one in Karachi Labour Court). Government procedures are cumbersome, tripartite consultations do not include women.

c) Crisis of Democracy: Democracy and the Rule of Law

The crisis in Pakistan is of democracy and democratic institutions that have failed to end the marginalisation and discrimination especially of religious and ethnic minorities and women (minorities form approximately 5% of Pakistan’s population. Scheduled castes majority among all minorities constituted by Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmedis, scheduled castes, etc.). Democracy is not necessarily gender sensitive it has to be made gender sensitive; it is not a state but a process. It is incorrect to say that democracy has not delivered in Pakistan for democracy has not yet come. We are in a stage of transition that can be long drawn. The environment that democracy creates where voices may be raised has not developed and the achievements have been (women’s movement, restoration of judiciary, etc.) despite the stifling of space. Institutions that have a role in taking democracy forward have not had the space to develop or have not succeeded in playing a positive role in promoting democracy. For example, many questions at critical moments have been referred to the judiciary for resolution which has not responded adequately, and in fact has harmed democracy.

With reference to the rule of law our struggle is for pre-eminence of laws that should be based on human rights and justice and not for authoritarian control. Strong institutions needed for ensuring the supremacy of law – qanoon ki baladasti – are lacking. Achieving the rule of law is a long process, not achievable in one day. The struggle towards that goal gets diverted leading to greater complexity. Women have struggled against many of the exploitative and discriminatory laws. In Pakistan the legal framework that comes from the Constitution has been polluted. While Article 25 that protects women includes affirmative action, the judiciary’s role is not evident in giving judgments that assert their rights and overcome weaknesses in law.

Judicial activism is very necessary, but for promoting democracy every institution needs to
play its role and also recognize its boundaries, and not go beyond them. In Pakistan, in the absence of functioning institutions people revert to the courts, which then:

a) Get over worked and are not able to do their work
b) Start thinking that they are to solve all problems
c) Prevent other institutions from developing

The lawyers’ movement was a unique movement. The reason for participation of women and civil society at large was not only to give the executive a message, but also to the judiciary that if the right thing is done there will be support. We should be critically viewing the performance of the judiciary.

Political parties so necessary for a strong political process perform unsatisfactorily and are perhaps difficult to support. The dilemma is that our institutional weaknesses will not be removed unless the political process is allowed to proceed, and this cannot be done without political parties which in turn are undemocratic within. It is therefore our responsibility to ask for transparency and accountability; unless there is a strong urge for accountability, including that of the public mindset, political parties will continue to work according to their convenience and without fear. To have elections is not enough. We need regular elections for not just to bring a government into power, but to throw it out when it fails to provide justice or maintain the rule of law. Unless that can happen the essential spirit of democracy will remain violated. It is therefore our responsibility to hold governments accountable, to not accept corruption.

Re minorities, we need to now go beyond tolerance to accommodation of minorities and talk of citizenship as the human rights principle is that nobody should be stateless. Pakistani law does not grant them citizenship which should be granted to them as well as fundamental rights. Under the Constitution fundamental rights are enforceable as they are part of the Objectives, whereas social, economic and cultural rights should not remain part of principles but also become enforceable. The rights are inalienable.

### Recommendations

- Justice based on principles of inalienable human rights.
- Women’s participation in movements to prevent them from slipping into isolation.
- Women’s organisations and movement to be diligent watchdogs of the judiciary.
- Regular electoral process.
- Move beyond toleration to accommodate the rights and concerns of minorities.
- Grant equal citizenship to all regardless of gender, religious belief or ethnicity.
- Incorporate social, economic and cultural rights as part of enforceable fundamentals rights under the Constitution.

### d) Crisis of Democracy: Local Government and Women

In 2000, the local government (LG) system was introduced which was distinct from previous local bodies systems as administrative and financial powers were for the first time also devolved...
The local government system was opened to the local level, creating opportunities for greater public participation, access to information, and allocation of resources.

The Local Government Ordinance, 2000, made provision for the reservation of 33% seats for women to be directly elected to Union Councils, the lowest tier of the three-tier LG system. The debate that followed was that women would not be available to fill these seats, however 92% seats were filled in the elections; in the next round of LG elections 95% seats were filled and a number of women nazims and naib-nazims were successfully returned. Under the law Union Councils (UC) could have 7 different committees with mandatory inclusion of women; as a result many women became members and headed the committees. Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) created for development work at the local level proved to be a space for women’s initiatives at the grassroots. 22% of the CCBs were of women. The perception of women local leaders got strengthened and a tangible difference was made as women got inducted into the mainstream of politics and also political parties. The police reform under the system included women in the advisory board.

Important for us to note and reflect is the fact that local bodies/governments have always come in Pakistan with military rule. Political parties have not addressed local governance and now with the return of civilian governance the move is to return to centralization. The provision of forming committees at the UC level is being removed, CCBs have been discontinued, the term “local body” instead of “local government” has been introduced and bureaucracy’s supremacy is being brought back. This reduction in public participation will reduce the presence of women in public politics and represents a reversal of their participation.

**Recommendations**

- Continuation of local government system with reforms to remove lacunae.
- Direct elections for all tiers of local government.
- Strengthen democracy, create more space for women, and ensure 33% quota at all levels.
- Electoral reforms should enable middle class to contest.
- Ensure provincial autonomy and reform local government system to stay within the framework of provincial autonomy.
- Have a secular state and repeal religion based amendments to the Constitution.

**e) Crisis of Democracy: The Minority Perspective**

Increasingly, religious minorities bear the brunt not only of hegemonic Islamic assertions but are unequal citizens in terms of fundamental rights even within the Constitution. Minority women are in a double bind – as women and as belonging to minority communities. Religious minorities are not only discriminated by religion, law, society and the justice system but are often among the poorest communities. This is particularly so since the Hindu community in Sindh and South Punjab are bonded or tied labour while Christians are relegated to specific service sectors. Within the poor, women tend to be the poorest and women from religious minorities are often not addressed even by their own communities or civil society. There has been the absence of affirmative action for minority women.
At the same time rising Islamic assertions, militancy and Talibanization have led to extreme cases of violence especially against Christian communities in the Punjab. An example of this is the recent case of Gojra where mob action forced minorities to leave their homes and areas. Faith based organizations are faced with challenges and women are subject to cultural restrictions. It is imperative that women from religious minorities be brought into the mainstream discourse by the Government and by civil society. Some of this is happening especially since women from the community are themselves taking the initiative and civil society, including the media, is playing a role in highlighting at least the most extreme cases of violence and oppression. A larger strategy however is needed.

f) Conflict-related Crises: Interface of Inter and Intra State Conflicts

The discussion opened with a review of conflicts and the impact of these on women in the South Asian region. The point of reference was the South Asian Feminist Declaration formulated by South Asian feminists in 1989 which identified the realities as they presented themselves at that point and anticipated trends in the future. Increasing militarization, national and religious chauvinisms it was argued would not only build on mutual and militant hostilities but would lead to increasing conflicts and violence. These in turn would not only become binding forces of national ‘integration’ but would be invoked to maintain constructions of the nation state and would give rise to ideologies that would suppress other identities. As a result of each of these transformations the declaration anticipated that women would be further oppressed.

Over the past twenty years these trends have intensified, particularly in Pakistan. The Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union in the 1980s continues to impact on Pakistan and Pakistani society with conflicts within Afghanistan overlapping with cross border conflicts across the Durand line separating Afghanistan and Pakistan and conflicts within Pakistan. While the interconnectivity of inter and intra state conflicts is located in a history that predates independence it is important to understand historical continuities since ‘resolutions’ of conflicts will necessarily need to address these. Complicating these internal and regional imperatives is the globalization of conflict particularly since 9/11 and the ‘war against terrorism’ much of which is being played out in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Given the imperatives of these ‘realities’ the relationship of the women’s movement and progressive civil society towards the state has undergone a transformation. While earlier a critique of the State and its often violent oppression of dissent was the starting point of feminist analysis, women and society in general are demanding that the writ of the state be upheld even if this requires military action. Violence thereby gets ‘justified’ and legitimatized and notions of justice

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**Recommendations**

- Promote and ensure gender justice.
- Remove new issues of insecurity of minorities and eliminate suspicion.
- Develop mechanisms for translating government pledges made at international forums.
- Form an independent Commission of minority affairs.
- Repeal the Blasphemy Law.
get transformed into notions of power and control. These notions of power and control then extend themselves as ideological parameters within society as a whole. Violence against women is an extension of this larger ideological construct and gets played out in society and within the home.

For instance, the ‘tolerance’ of violence by the state/military against the Taliban or other militants, including those fighting for regional and ethnic rights leads to a silencing on violence against ‘suspects’ and against civilians, often as a result of ethnic and other identity profiling. An acceptance of collective punishments/disappearances/detentions/target killings and acceptance of impunity leads to a less tolerant society as a whole and to the tolerance of violence against women and the marginalized. People’s demands and the demands of women are thus silenced by the ‘larger’ questions of national and personal ‘security.’

The women’s movement while being a part of these societal trends has nevertheless contributed to the debates and to raising issues, especially as conflicts impact on women. To the extent that women, peace and security issues are addressed and demands expressed for the inclusion of women’s experiences and voices in peace negotiations and resolutions has been because of a concerted effort by the women’s movement. However, the movement itself needs to question violence in all its manifestations – whether it is the violence against women, violence in society, violence by the State and non state actors as well as economic violence. It also needs to examine aspects of conflict situations that are often not ‘visible’ or are silenced, for instance the displacement of women, whether in Baluchistan or inter and intra city displacement as a result of local level conflicts. At the same time the movement must address the politics of humanitarian support and the politics of foreign aid especially as this may lead to or propel more conflicts in the future. A more inclusive women’s movement is needed to address the complexity of this problem yet while doing so the movement must not lose it own political understanding of peace and justice.

g) Conflict-related Crises: Internally Displaced Persons

Inter and intra state migrations and displacements form a continuing motif in Pakistan from the unprecedented cross border movements of people in 1947 to the millions of Afghan refugees who sought security in Pakistan as a result of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union in the 1980s and intra and intra state conflicts in Afghanistan since 2001. Internal displacements have also been widespread as a result of military or militant actions, natural disasters such as the earthquake in 2005, by certain development programmes and when contending forces have led to conflicts within communities. In each, the security of women has been particularly impacted.

The large scale military action against the Taliban in Swat and Malakand in 2009 led to unprecedented displacement of people. Out of a population of about 6.5 million almost 3.6 million moved out of their regions. A proportion of these were housed in refugee camps administered by the government, the military, international organizations and civil society. A majority were given shelter by family and communities in adjoining areas while some (despite resistance by the provinces of Sindh and Punjab) sought shelter in other parts of Pakistan. The military ‘victory’ by the army has enabled those internally displaced to start returning to their homes yet the future they face is not only uncertain but fraught with impediments.
This presentation was focused on a specific programme addressing internally displaced women based on women’s testimonies and on site research and activism. At the time of the Beijing + 15 National Consultation in September 2009, many of the houses and shops of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) were still locked and inaccessible. The non availability of food and distress sales of goods and properties were primary concerns, especially since official registration of IDPs by government authorities had not yet been systematized. The data released by the Earthquake Review Unit on 10 July 2009 showed that the maximum eligible registered displaced persons came from Swat followed by Bajaur, Lower Dir, Mohmand Agency, Shangla and Malakand districts. Specific details of those displaced and having returned were shared.

There are serious and alarming implications for the process of support, relocation and reconstruction for women even though often they are the most vulnerable in conflict situations. Women are ‘regulated’ not only by the community because of local culture and traditions but also by Security Protocols put in place by the Government and the military. These protocols are mandatory for all work undertaken by civil society and aid agencies and in most instances women development workers have to conform to strictures that impede their work. Many of these also reinforce patriarchal structures. For instance, it is advised that when stationing women staff in rural areas they must be accompanied by another female staff member. Discretion is advised for men approaching local women which must be done in consultation with males/heads of families although women staff members can freely interact with women. Care is meant to be taken within offices working in the area. Female staff members must be seated separately and male and female staff members are to avoid conducting meetings behind closed doors. Further limitations are working hours for women and the discouragement of ‘mixed’ activities (that is those that include both men and women). This includes training workshops/seminars/official functions etc. Humanitarian organizations working in conflict areas must also obtain a No Objection Certificate and/or approval prior to starting operations and all projects related to intervention in any conflict area must be submitted for approval.

While these impediments and protocols can hamper the working of civil society organizations, especially Pakistani civil society, the challenge for women working in these areas and on women, peace and security needs to be addressed. The government’s ‘Early Recovery Plan’ includes aspects specific to women not only in terms of policy but also funds being allocated for trauma counselling and trainings. The focus of the government, however, is on mega projects and infrastructure which makes it imperative not only that the women’s movement channel its efforts to address the present exigencies as far as women are concerned but to ensure that patriarchal structures do not get reinforced that could be detrimental for women in the long term. This requires innovative and creative approaches so that while addressing immediate concerns and being sensitive to social norms women are integrated into the reconstruction process.

h) Conflict-related Crises: The Process of ‘Talibanization’ and its Impact

Until 2002, the Taliban for Pakistanis meant those in power in Afghanistan which while oppressive for women did not impact on Pakistan. This changed radically after the ‘defeat’ of the Taliban by the United States in Afghanistan in 2001 which not only pushed Afghan Taliban...
across the Durand line but gave impetus to a number of Pakistani militant groups which have
assumed a generic movement which threaten the State itself. However, the response to this
phenomenon by Pakistanis is not uniform.

On the one hand the Taliban is seen as coming in from the margins and radically threatening
the state. They are seen as being against women; against minorities; against the people; against
democratic norms; as a form of religious militancy to change the nature of the State and/or of
an international terror network which threatens global security. Vigilantism against women and
minorities, collective banning of films, music and other creative expressions, collective killing
by the Taliban give sustenance to this positioning.

Reiterating the argument made earlier in the discussion on women and conflict and rising
conservatism and intolerance within society and the ‘justification’ of state violence in the
interest of ensuring state legitimacy, the emphasis in this presentation is on how violence gets
‘normalized’ as a form of control. This extends to violence against women in society generally
and within the home. While the women’s movement used to challenge the use of violence under
any circumstances, even within this movement there is an ongoing debate on whether violence
can be condoned under certain circumstances, especially against those challenging the nature
of the state itself.

Others view talibanization as expressing ‘legitimate’ concerns arising out of economic
deprivation, injustice and western hegemony. Several peace agreements between state
forces/political players with the Taliban have been based on upholding ‘speedy’ justice such as
the Nizam-e-Adil negotiated by the government in Swat. This position is given legitimacy by
the trend towards social conservatism and by the argument that poverty is the fundamental
cause of violent dissent, and that the ‘suppression’ or lack of understanding of Islam leads to
reactions that are retrogressive.

This position is given validity by the international forces not least by donor and academic
communities. Over the last three decades and with even greater focus over the last few years
the move to ‘understand’ Islam and to promote ‘progressive’ Islam has led to a narrowing of
spaces for the articulation of other identities. The state and the media play a significant role
in this ideological construct. This trend has particularly focused on women and Islam with
funding agencies encouraging and supporting ‘progressive’ interpretations and supporting
women’s groups addressing the problematic within these narrow confines. ‘Respecting the
veil’ is now a key element of development both intellectually and within developing or activist
programmes.

Donor agencies for instance are supporting such projects across the Muslim world and most
donor assistance to Pakistan is premised on this narrowing. Development of women is thus
seen as economic contribution (often in the garb of women’s empowerment) with an emphasis
on the informal, domestic sphere usually in the form of micro credit schemes. At the same time
secular forces are weakened or marginalized in this process not least the women’s movement
for equal rights in the public and private spheres. The women’s movement must address this
complex but urgent phenomenon if it seeks to empower women at multiple levels by addressing
and challenging all articulations of patriarchy.
i) Violence Against Women: Dimensions of Physical Violence on Women

While violence against women has been a focus of the women’s movement there has been a tendency to understand this either in terms of legal and institutional mechanisms or as articulations of culture and tradition. Seldom addressed is the fact that both processes are in collusion and tend to reinforce or give legitimacy to both. This discussion focuses on the practice of Karo Kari (a form of ‘honour’ killing particularly prevalent in Sindh). Often Karo Kari is understood as a cultural norm. While this aspect may have validity, a cursory understanding of culture does not explain why such norms and traditions exist and why so often those killing in the name of honour are able to do so with impunity. The role of the state in sustaining such norms needs also to be examined since the state often upholds culture and tradition.

This presentation was based on research undertaken on this specific aspect of violence against women. Over the previous year 1600 deaths were recorded as a result of Karo Kari. Of the 3000 accused only 3% were convicted of the crime. This gives weight to the argument that cultural violence resonates with the law since the police, the laws and the judicial process often uphold cultural norms and practices. ‘Honour’ killing is invariably executed by supposed ‘protectors and guardians’ of women, in most cases members of the immediate family or kin. In a society where the family governs almost all relationships and where ‘family matters’ are given legal cover, crimes within the home are often silenced. The family as a primary institution of control and moral articulation therefore gets translated into law with the private and the public in collusion with each other to uphold cultural practices and articulations.

The legal cover of Qisas and Diyat (compensation and forgiveness by members of the family) for instance allows for murderers especially those within the family, to be forgiven. This law was amended in 2004 but these changes still allow the relatives of victims to negotiate a settlement. Informal systems of justice such as the Jirga are not illegal in Pakistan and while the criminal procedure code is clear that murder is a crime, common law still understands murder as a private offence. This is ironic given that Zina (adultery or sexual relations) which are or should be a private matter is a crime against the state.

Recent legislation such as the Domestic Violence Bill widens the space for state intervention within the home and changes the divide between the public and the private – nevertheless, resistance by the Council of Islamic Ideology (and silence by the Senate) has impeded the bill being translated into law.

**Recommendations**

It was agreed that the women’s movement has done tremendous work in not only highlighting the many dimensions of violence against women but in working towards legal and institutional changes. However, the challenge of contesting both the state and society working in tandem with each other is formidable. Nevertheless, women must continue to struggle for their rights and their autonomy as part of the mainstream and as an autonomous women’s movement.

There is a need to address psychological aspects of violence through public awareness campaigns, strong and effective support mechanisms, a focus on qualitative rather than quantitative measures, monitoring and accountability mechanisms and public sensitization programmes including trainings.
j) Violence Against Women: Psychological Violence and Trauma

Violence against women is not only a physical violation of individual human rights but has enormous psychological implications. Sexual abuse and violence is a threat not only to the individual victim but also to the well being of those who are witness to such violence. Long term exposure to situations of social inequality, verbal abuse, and harassment can similarly be as threatening, especially the threat of repeatedly being subject to these. These and other aspects of violence in society, as well as catastrophic events such as natural disasters, war and mass violence impact women in different ways.

Women experience a range of symptoms and effects at the physical, emotional and cognitive levels. These include sleep and eating disturbances, sexual dysfunctions, low energy, chronic unexplained pain, shock, denial, flashbacks, nightmares, fear, anger, resentment, despair, depression and loss of self esteem. Generally this could also have impacts such as withdrawal from normal routine, difficulty in making decisions, feeling distracted, etc. These symptoms and traumas are seldom addressed making women even more vulnerable to violence since these manifestations are often understood as resistance by women to fulfill what are considered their responsibilities within the home and in society.

Education and Training of Women

The Working Group (WG) on education and training felt that the Government had failed to improve public schooling leading to increased reliance on the private sector, and that “talibanization” had contributed to an increase in conservatism. Both teachers and students are impacted by the inadequacy of cover for health related issues for e.g. hepatitis, quality of drinking water, pollution, and nutrition etc., resulting in poor educational outcomes. The WG pointed to the double burden of household responsibilities and careers, preventing women from reaching the top. Increased harassment of girls and women during their commute to schools and back, poverty, and lack of accessible secondary and higher education facilities for girls all combine to keep girls out of the education system. It is the failure of linking education and social issues at policy level that the educational status of women remains among the lowest in the world.

**Recommendations**

- Improve quality of education and remove gender biases in texts.
- Provide training opportunities for girls and women in diverse non traditional fields.
- Understand the political, economic and social context of girls’ education and unpack gender accordingly. Expand the role of the media to create these linkages.
- Address as a high priority the critical area of mobility.

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10 The issues not discussed in the main plenary sessions were taken up through group work. Given below are summaries of issues and recommendations from the Working Groups of Education, Health, the Environment and the Media.
Health

The WG on health was of the view that women and girls lack access to the most basic health care services and are at the highest risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. Female service providers are generally unavailable in rural areas, medicines are costly, and government hospitals do not take the responsibility for providing medicines. In addition, women are often not taken to medical clinics or hospitals because of the absence of female doctors. Ongoing conflict in various parts of the country has a significant impact on women’s health. Without access to services, women specially are at greater risk of maternal morbidity and mortality. This is compounded by their lack of awareness regarding health matters. Unfortunately, basic principles of health care and hygiene are not included in the curriculum.

Recommendations

- Ensure access to both informal and formal education for girls paying particular attention to the needs of girls and women in minority and marginalized communities.
- Promote public campaigns aimed at parents and community leaders on the importance of girls’ education.
- Include basic reproductive health information in school curricula for girls starting at age 10 with information getting progressively more mature with age.
- School texts to ensure that by age 18 girls receive complete premarital information including information on family planning, nikahnama, reproductive parts and sexual relations in order for girls to have ownership and control over their body.
- Increase visibility of women in media, highlighting and giving more space to women’s issues.

- Government and CSOs should develop support mechanisms jointly for improved service delivery as well as educate health care providers to recognize and address specific physical, maternal and mental needs of women in their diverse locations and backgrounds.
- Provide opportunities to women for learning about basic health and sanitation practices.
- Demand government accountability in provision of critical RH services in particular universal access to RH/FP services as committed to under ICPD and MDGs.
- Organize regular mobile health and RH camps in under-serviced areas to provide primary health care at the door step but also to accelerate advocacy and mobilization processes.
- Eschew short term projects and institute programme level activities.
- Take a holistic approach in population to include aspects of sexual health (emergency obstetric and neonatal care, Primary Health Care, accessibility and affordability of services) to achieve a decline in maternal mortality, improve maternal health indicators and respond to unmet need for family planning.
Women and the Environment

The WG agreed that there was a close poverty-environment degradation nexus which is compounded by the complete absence of environmental/agricultural education for girls and the marginalisation of women in their role of preserving and transmitting indigenous knowledge, promoting biodiversity and managing environmental resources. The impact of environmental degradation on women is not focused upon by policy makers for e.g., the creation of toxicity in the bloodstream through industrial and saline drainage effluent in water bodies that women may use for domestic needs; pesticides and GMOs and their impact on women working in agriculture; the poor quality of drinking water; poor management of solid waste in urban and rural areas; public burning of waste as a waste disposal mechanism, etc.

**Recommendations**

- Launch campaigns in schools on the importance of keeping environment safe from pollution
- Initiate campaigns addressed to men/male policy makers regarding poverty and environment nexus
- Provide environment friendly livelihood security through promotion of organic agriculture and indigenous fruit/trees
- Stop conversion of prime agricultural land for housing, industrialisation and urbanisation
- Stop building big dams and introduce innovative measures of water and energy conservation

Media

The group discussing the media and its role felt that PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority) is often misused by the Government and the committees formed by PEMRA are on paper only. The absence of women specific concerns and an inadequate code of ethics must be included. It was also felt that civil society has no mechanism to keep check on media which presents stereotypical portrayal of women even though there is greater visibility of women and their issues as well as more space/opportunity for women to join the media. Its motivation being financial considerations and profit making, women’s positive portrayal is not a priority. Whereas electronic media has proliferated it lacks professional training and is under pressure of the religious lobby. At the same time the trans-nationalization of media is leading to the ignoring of local culture.

**Recommendations**

- NGOs should take the initiative for advocacy and interaction with journalists/media persons
- Government to pay attention to gender-sensitisation of all forms of media
Beyond Beijing +15

The review of Beijing +15 in Pakistan highlighted the changing context in which women’s issues need to be examined. It also became clear that the strong linkages between some of the critical areas of BPfA demand an integrated approach rather than isolated/vertical one. Therefore it was proposed that:

- The critical areas of ‘Poverty, Economy and Environment’ be clustered together.
- Rights and legal provisions should crosscut and be a part of every critical area instead of a critical area on ‘Human Rights’
- The ‘Power and Decision-Making’ critical area should focus more on sharing power and changing roles in the household
- ‘Girl Child” concerns should be reviewed and actions infused into all critical areas actions to ensure inclusion and focus on the girl child
- Greater focus on persons displaced due to conflicts and natural disasters

It was strongly felt that the BPfA is a basic document that defines women’s rights and the recommended actions in the twelve critical areas should not lose their validity but be reinforced in the light of ‘emerging’ issues through necessary amendments in the BPfA and the National Plan of Action.

The Process and the Outcome of the National Consultation

The National Consultation was attended by over 140 participants representing a cross section of grassroots organizations; provincial and national organizations; independent researchers and activists; and Members of the Parliament. The presentations and discussions in plenary were of high calibre and intensive and located in a historical and empirical framework. Both days began with feminist poetry readings, and a slide show of the early days of Women’s Action Forum Lahore’s activism was for many a reliving of memories. Memories played a major role especially among the older members since several had been a part of the process towards the 1st Conference in 1975 while others participated in the 3rd World Conference in 1985. Many more had memories of the process towards Beijing and the World Conference in 1995. For younger members this provided a backdrop to the movement and allowed for a historical location. Particularly important was the role played by Pakistan (both the Government and the NGO and women’s movement community) in initiating and propelling the WCW process and giving it a sense of ownership.

This was also an excellent opportunity for those who would be participating in the international events to understand both the context and the processes that they would be involved in. For Shirkat Gah and ASR this participation also enabled a much more inclusive and representative decision in terms of whom to facilitate in terms of its own regional and international programme.
Glimpses from the two day National Consultation ‘Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future’ held in Lahore, Pakistan, in September 2009.
Participants at the three day NGO Forum “Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future” organized by Asia Pacific Women’s Watch in Manila, Philippines.
With the theme ‘Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future,’ the Asia Pacific Women’s Watch (APWW) organized a three day NGO Forum for ‘stock taking’ and ‘celebrating the gains achieved by women’, for ‘learning lessons from successes and challenges especially by civil society,’ and for ‘exacting accountability from those committed to advance women’s human rights and gender equality.’ The Forum was held from the 21st to the 24th of October 2009 in Manila, the Philippines and was hosted by Miriam College. The programme included plenary sessions; parallel workshops; special events; An Asia Pacific Women’s Bazaar; exhibitions of films and exhibitions (see Annex 8).

The Forum opened on the 21st evening with a welcome reception and cultural show. This was an excellent opportunity for the approximately 700 participants to meet each other, catch up with friends, make new ones and for a sense of solidarity and common struggle. The cultural show was an excellent extravaganza of dances from different parts of the Philippines.

The Opening Session and the first plenary session not only sought to review the progress since 1995 but to bring together those who had played a role since the Nairobi Conference in 1985. The welcome address was given by Patricia Licuanan, Convenor of the Asia Pacific NGO Forum and Former Chairperson of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (1994-1996). The keynote speaker was introduced by Leticia Ramos-Shahani, Convenor of the 3rd WCW in Nairobi in 1985. Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General United Nations, Executive Secretary UNESCAP and previously Executive Director of UNIFEM for over a decade spoke with nostalgia of the journey of her own involvement in the WCW process. She stressed the importance of gender responsive accountability and gave wide ranging analysis on the gains made, areas of concern and future challenges (see Annex 9).

The Forum had 6 Plenary Sessions each reflecting on crucial and emerging issues in detail and highlighting emerging areas of concern (see Annex 8). The Pakistani women’s movement was honoured in that three women from Pakistan were invited to speak in Plenary Sessions, two of them hosted by APWW and the Manila Forum organizers while travel was supported by the SG/ASR UN Women project. Rukhshanda Naz spoke in the session on ‘Gender and Human Security in Situations of Conflict and Post-Conflict’ while Tahira Abdullah was invited to speak in the session of ‘An Agency for Women in the UN, At Last!’
The first plenary on ‘Feminisms Through Generations’ was to give a historical continuity from Nairobi to Beijing while Part 2 of this session was designed to bring together the voices of a younger generation. Nighat Khan of ASR, a key player in the process since 1985, was invited in her personal capacity to reflect on the women’s movement especially since the WCW in Nairobi. Her presentation ‘Such a long Journey’ took up the debate on what we meant by the ‘women’s movement.’ A movement she argued, by its very definition does not have a beginning or an end. It flows through history sometimes more dramatically and at others more quietly. No particular moment in history and no particular event or organization can claim credit for being a turning point for the articulation of women’s aspirations, rights and agency. Women have struggled through centuries in multiple locations, either alone or together, and it is these struggles on the ground that gave impetus to the UN to recognise the importance of foregrounding the development of women and for equal rights. Indeed the World Conferences and UNIFEM itself is an outcome of this struggle and not a driving force of the movement. Traversing the history of women’s voices against oppression through centuries, she concluded that the definition of the women’s movement must not only be more inclusive since each woman taking a stand makes space for others but that it should not be restricted to NGOs and more formal women’s organizations. The future of the movement lay not in funded professional groups or individuals but in autonomous, political struggles not constrained by the imperatives of funding, donors, or projects. This was a major challenge to the younger generation but it must not despair despite enormous challenges ahead. The younger generation must make the future while building on the present and the past. Nighat ended with a verse from Maya Angelou’s poem:

“You may write me down in history

with your bitter, twisted lies.

You may trod me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I’ll rise”

In parallel sessions Shirkat Gah and ASR organized a panel discussion on ‘Feminism and Social Movements.’ The active mobilization by the SG/ASR team ensured this session was extremely well attended with women standing against the walls because of lack of space. The panel was a coordinated mix of a presentation by Najma Sadeque (SG) on women, agriculture and sustainable development, with Kishwar Naheed reading her poetry on the issues discussed as well as poetry that she had read out in the Nairobi Conference in 1985. Nighat Khan moderated the session and read the English translations of Kishwar Naheed’s poetry. This was one of the few panels where the discussion went on for almost an hour after it was formally over.

Humaira Sheikh was a panelist in the session on ‘Spaces for Women’ especially in disaster situations and shared her experiences of recovery and rehabilitation after the Earthquake in Pakistan and Kashmir in 2005, and more recently of the internally displaced persons in Swat. Other women from Pakistan particularly those from Shirkat Gah’s Research Unit (Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Contexts) were involved in other panels and film presentations with a film by Gulnar Tabbasum, *A Small Dream*, being particularly appreciated.

Nighat Khan of ASR was also invited to speak in the panel on ‘Women, Peace and Security:
Breakthroughs in International Norms and their Significance to Asia and the Pacific. Nighat spoke on the breakthroughs, challenges and dilemmas for the women’s movement and shared the experiences of the women and peace movement in South Asia and particularly Pakistan within the backdrop of conflicts in the region in their historical perspective and present realities. The role of the women’s movement especially in working towards the recognition of the specificities of women’s experiences of conflict within the region and the movements’ inventions internationally and regionally that led to the UNSCR 1325 was particularly highlighted.

The Pakistani Contingent: Through the Process and Feedback

The Pakistani contingent was one of the largest single delegations with about 27 women of which 14 were supported by UNIFEM (the 14th participant was, however, unable to attend the forum). The SG/ASR selection was dynamic and included women from different provinces, religions, class backgrounds and interests. It was a cohesive group and the interplay between the older more experienced members and those newer to the process was of particular importance since interventions and attendance was coordinated in order to get as much experience as possible from the Forum. It was also the most visible with books and posters for display and distribution. The ceremonial intervention before the start of the second day when younger members honoured the speakers, the organizers and those who had played a key role since Nairobi by giving them dupattas of Women’s Action Forum on which the WAF charter has been printed was particularly appreciated with a rush by participants to get the few duppatas left as well as the Beijing +15 posters brought out by SG/ASR to commemorate the review. Inspired by the Forum, the Pakistani delegation often broke into song, even during the plenary sessions, bringing several others on the floor in the closing session.

Several members of the SG/ASR collaborative programme reflected on their experiences. ‘It was a good experience in many ways,’ wrote Tasneem Ahmar from Uks, ‘It was great to be included in the huge Pakistani group and to enjoy the company of young and experienced women activists, researchers and to be able to share experiences...it was also good to see many young Pakistani women in the frontline.’ Kishwar Naheed reflected that, ‘Although much still had to be done, the Forum provided an in depth analysis on the women in the present context, it was beneficial for us all,’ while Shabana Waheed thought that it was an excellent opportunity to ‘listen to famous activists which I have heard about but have never met.’ Apart from other issues she learnt the process of how collective statements are made especially when there is diversity of opinion and experience. Other feedback was equally positive with Humaira Sheikh giving extensive details of the many sessions she attended. ‘It was heartening,’ she wrote, ‘to see many women attending the forum and as part of the women’s movement. We had three speakers from Pakistan who presented excellent papers in the Plenary and made me proud of our movement and struggles.’ She further added, ‘It was wonderful to see all the giants of the movement in Manila and wonderful to see and hear about the progress made in other Asian countries...the workshops were many and one wanted to attend them all.’ Arfana Mallah summed up the general feeling saying, ‘It was a pleasure to be a part of such an energetic,
cooperative and well representative group which in itself is a great learning experience for me’. She made an important point in her reflection when she wrote that it seemed to her from the memories of those from an older generation that ‘the movement then was more action-packed, while the forum seemed more action-orientated which seemed to reflect the project orientated movement of the present.’ Arfana felt the Forum was a wonderful and rich experience and felt that ‘our seniors, Nighet, Kishwar, Najma, Shagufta and Kausar tried to guide us and made us realize that we were one delegation representing our country and that collectively we must get the most out of the experience.’ Noting that the SG/ASR arrangements and logistics were excellent, very coordinated, smooth and happy she wrote ‘hats off to Shirkat Gah and ASR.’
UNESCAP organized and hosted the high-level intergovernmental meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 16th to 18th November 2009. The agenda was to discuss the regional implementation of the Beijing Declaration and PfA with particular focus on good practices, obstacles, and new challenges in the region. Government delegations of countries in the region were to give country presentations and to collectively reflect on a joint regional position and declaration towards the Beijing +15 Review to be held in New York in 2010. Over a hundred women and men from governments and NGO’s attended the High-Level Meeting at UNESCAP to discuss and debate the 15-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The agenda was extensive but Noeleen Heyzer Under-Secretary General of the UN and Executive Director of ESCAP had broken ground by including presentations by civil society and women’s groups within the formal sessions. This is unprecedented in the UN when civil society is given equal time in UN deliberations (see Annex 11). Dr. Heyzer’s keynote address opening the proceedings started by her first acknowledging her own journey since the 4th World Conference in Beijing. She outlined the achievements since Beijing and stated that as we meet here today “these advancements are creating real improvements to the lives of millions of mothers, sisters, daughters and granddaughters across the Asia Pacific region.” She then went on to outline that “despite the progress over the last 15 years, persistent obstacles and challenges remain.” Violence, domestic violence, and the rise of extremism in the name of culture have led to a closing of spaces for women. She cited high incidences of maternal deaths due to lack of maternal health services, and the lack of women at high levels across all spheres of public life. She also commented on the need for well resourced and politically supported national women’s machineries as they are crucial to support gender equality. Climate change was also a key emerging challenge with women and children being 14 times more likely to be victims of natural disasters than men. “We should be proud of the gains, however, we must realize that there is still much that remains to be done – Let us keep on moving forward, never turning back” (see Annex 12).
In view of the inclusive process initiated by Noeleen Heyzer to bring civil society within the main sessions, the plenary gave the floor to a representative of NGOs in the region. Dr. Patricia Licuanan shared the Outcomes Document of Asia Pacific NGO Forum held in Manila in October 2009. The statement presented the gains, challenges and recommendations from the forum. As she delivered the outcomes from the APNGO Forum images from the 700 women from 46 countries who attended the forum were also displayed as a continuing moving backdrop to the presentation.

There were differences in the composition of the government delegations with some giving the meeting great importance and being led by Ministers, while others were led by lower grade officers. The inputs were therefore patchy and some perfunctory. In each, however, the inclusion and participation of women representing civil society and the women’s movement were by and large excellent and pulled the debate to more sophisticated levels.

The Pakistan Government was represented by the MOWD’s GRAP project and civil servants in other departments. Dr. Zille Huma Member of Parliament was to have led the delegation but was unable to participate. This created somewhat of an anomaly since the NGO delegation included Bushra Gohar Member of Parliament and had therefore the most senior representative present. Though this is a more general problem since political leaders tend to wear different hats and often the selection process gets confused, in retrospect, SG and ASR agreed that they should have considered this in the selection of the NGO delegation supported by UNIFEM.

On the second day, the Representative of Pakistan reported that the Government had launched a National Plan of Action to implement commitments relating to the BPfA and respond to the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. A law providing for protection for working women had recently been enacted, and draft legislation regarding domestic violence and protection against harassment in the workplace was currently tabled before the parliament. Furthermore, quotas of 33 percent women in local government and seats reserved for women in national and provincial assemblies were in place. The representative indicated that although women were important contributors to the economy, their share in economic benefits, opportunities and access to resources was not proportionate to their contribution. Increasing poverty resulting from structural adjustment programmes and globalization was also disproportionately impacting women.
During a panel discussion on the issue of violence against women, Ms. Farida Shaheed from Pakistan, Independent Expert on Cultural Rights under the United Nations Human Rights Council was invited in her personal capacity to present a paper in the plenary session. Farida Shaheed argued that eliminating violence against women faces two major challenges. One that a ‘commitment, even from the top is never enough by itself to change ground realities for women’ and secondly that ‘underlying the resistance by rendering violence unacceptable, unbearable, inexcusable lie engraved in deep seated habits and attitudes of a still largely patriarchal world that find easy expression in ‘cultural difference’ and that ‘violence against women is always legitimized by arguments of culture.’ Exploring the nature of culture itself and arguing that no society is without culture she emphasized that the future was dependent on ‘a culture of violence being replaced by a culture of peace’ (see Annex 13).

The SG/ASR NGO delegation was involved in several side discussions with country representatives and civil society members especially with the APWW which used the occasion not only to meet and celebrate their own process from 1993 to the present but for more formal discussions on internal positions including future structures. ASR was a founding member and member Steering Committee of the APWW from 1995 to 1998 with Shagufta Alizai participating. Both Shagufta Alizai (representing SG) and Nighat Khan (representing ASR) were invited for the celebratory lunch of the process from 1993 to 2009. This was an acknowledgement by APWW of the role both have played at the national and regional level and there was considerable emphasis on the importance of both coming together for the Beijing +15 review process.
The South Asia Consultation was held on the 17th and 18th of December 2009 and titled ‘Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future.’ Held in New Delhi, it was organized jointly by South Asia Women’s Watch (SAWW) and the National Alliance of Women, India (NAWO). It was supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The specific objective of the Consultation was to assess issues of common concern in the South Asian region and as Professor Pam Rajput, the coordinator and host of the Consultation put it, ‘weaving our wisdom into collective voices of South Asia towards forging a better future.’ The consultation served as a platform to identify and evaluate gains, gaps and challenges being faced by women today, and provided an opportunity to strategize on ways to advocate for these at the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women to be held in March 2010 and the Global NGO Forum preceding the CSW session, as well as plan ahead for the ECOSOC inter-ministerial meeting on BPfA in June 2010. Approximately one hundred women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the Consultation. The 8-member Pakistan delegation was a mix of young and experienced members from civil society all of whom had been part of the national process in Pakistan and a few had also participated in the earlier NGO Forum in Manila.

The Consultation was inaugurated by Mrs. Krishna Tirath, the Union Minister of State (Women and Child Development) Government of India and was addressed in the inaugural session by Dr. Mohini Giri, former Chairperson, India’s National Commission for Women (NCW) and Ms. Anne F. Stenhammer, Regional Director, UNIFEM (South Asia Regional Office) (see Annex 18).

Following short messages of greeting from representatives of each participating country (Shagufta Alizai delivered the Pakistan message), Selay Ghaffar, Salma Khan, Sheba George, Shanta Shrestha, Khawar Mumtaz and Dr. Sepali Kottegoda presented country reports, highlighting the gains, gaps and challenges faced in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, respectively. Each of the presentations provided a nuanced...
understanding of various issues prevalent in the South Asian region. The inclusion of Afghani participants at the conference marked the first time a women’s group from Afghanistan had been able to join in a regional consultation in South Asia. For Bangladesh, Salma Khan demonstrated that while positive developments were seen in legal reforms, including the Citizenship Act and the Birth Registration Act, women still continued to face hurdles in accessing the legal system, and their political participation was low. In India, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 was a significant achievement; however, as Sheba George noted, it was being undermined by poor resource allocation and non-existent infrastructure. And in Pakistan, Khawar Mumtaz reported that while considerable developments had been made in the areas of legal rights since 1995 (such as women’s representation in elected bodies, amendment in the Hudood Ordinances placing rape under criminal procedure, etc.) the country still faced some harrowing challenges related to violence against women and others linked to regional and international conflicts.

Nighat Said Khan was given the responsibility of summing up the country specific presentations and to integrate these into a regional perspective. This was to be done simultaneously and presented immediately after the presentations. The common threads seemed to be that there have been gains made by way of legislation and there is an increased representation of women from the local government level to the national legislatures. However, this had not necessarily led to the gains expected since the non implementation of the laws and policies was also common. While ‘notional democracy’ existed, none of the participant countries were moving closer towards democratic processes, and impunity within state structures and in society including the domestic sphere was a common concern.

Thematic issues were discussed in working groups on six significant contemporary challenges before the women’s movement in South Asia. The objective of the group discussion was to debate and analyze a South Asia perspective for presentation and discussion in the plenary and thus contribute to the formulation of the South Asia Statement on Beijing +15. The challenges reviewed by the groups were as follows: Women’s Political Participation; Women and Conflict; Women and Economy; Violence against Women and Human Rights; Women’s Education; Women’s Health and emerging issues concerning Climate Change and the Impact on Women, as well as Single Women, Ageing and Disability. Pakistan members spread themselves across the 6 working groups. Three WGs were chaired/co-chaired by Pakistan delegation members (Kausar S. Khan, Nighat Said Khan and Khawar Mumtaz).

The Consultation concluded with a discussion on UN’s Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR), and formation of a drafting committee to draw up the South Asia Statement on Beijing +15 on the basis of the two-day proceedings. Members of the drafting committee were Pam Rajput and Meera Khanna (India), Selay Ghaffar (Afghanistan), Mahmuda Islam (Bangladesh), Anjana Shakya (Nepal), Khawar Mumtaz and Shagufta Alizai (Pakistan), and Sepali Kottegoda (Sri Lanka). The statement was finalised and adopted with “cautious optimism” (see Annex 19). Notwithstanding the challenges faced by women of the region, all the participants felt a strong sense of partnership and declared their commitment to collective advocacy on common issues and in pursuit of common goals. They reiterated their resolve to integrate the South Asian women’s perspective in the global discourse on human rights and gender equality.
The 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place from 2nd to 12th March 2010, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The focus of the Commission was a 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. During this session emphasis was placed on the “sharing of experiences and good practices, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals.” Participants of the two-week session included representatives of United Nations Member states, NGOs and UN bodies. From Pakistan, besides the participants facilitated by ASR and SG, there were several other NGO representatives who individually and together spread into side events in their areas of interest.

Prior to the United Nations CSW, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women organized the NGO Global Women’s Forum, in commemoration of the 15th year anniversary of the Beijing Conference. The objective of the two-day event (27-28 February 2010) was to review progress made on the BPfA, examine existing challenges and collectively plan for the future on issues concerning women’s rights and gender equality. The Forum took place at the Salvation Army Headquarters in New York. Following the welcoming remarks, Dr. Sima Samar, the current Chairperson of Afghanistan’s Independent Human Rights Commission, delivered the keynote address. During her speech she highlighted her own experiences and explained that although Afghanistan had signed CEDAW without reservations, women were still denied basic rights and prevented from participating in society as equal citizens. After her address, a series of panel discussions, plenary sessions and workshops took place over the two-day Forum. The topics discussed at the panels included Advancing Women’s Rights (1975-2001); The State of the World’s Women: Patriarchy, Violence against Women and Girls, Women’s Health and Climate Change; Voices from Around the World; Regional Priorities and Action, and Fulfilling the Promise of Gender Equality, Peace and Development.

The Asia-Pacific Statement that came out of the Manila NGO Forum was read out at the Global Women’s Forum plenaries by Professor Pam Rajput (see Annex 23). The Statement welcomed the adoption of the Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889, which realized and encouraged the significance of women in the process of peace-building and conflict resolution, and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s global campaign on ending violence against
women. The statement applauded the September 2009 General Assembly Resolution that promised the implementation of GEAR, a major campaign in the run up to CSW, that was being advocated by the Pakistani NGOs, CSOs, and that had been discussed extensively at the regional review sessions for Beijing +15, both in Delhi and Manila. GEAR aimed at creating a single gender entity within the United Nations and after intense advocacy, a new gender equality entity headed by an Under-Secretary General was established in September 2009. Although the establishment of the new entity based on the Composite Model marked a major breakthrough in the global women’s movement, funding for it fell far short of what was expected. During CSW 54, there was intense discussion on the funding and the start-up fund of US$ 500 million was not perceived as sufficiently adequate.

The plenary session of the 54th United Nations CSW comprised of 45 member states including Pakistan. Pakistan’s government delegation was led by Anis Haroon, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women and a human rights activist. On the 3rd of March 2010, Haroon presented a country statement at the CSW session. Her statement reflected the steps taken to implement commitments of the Beijing Declaration and the BPfA in Pakistan, through a realization of gender equality and empowerment of women. These included the establishment of the National Commission on the Status of Women in 2000, Protection against Harassment at Workplace Bill 2009, as well as progress on the Benazir Income Support Program and the Gender Reform Action Plan of the MOWD (see Annex 21).

Aside from the CSW formal events, a series of parallel sessions were organized at the United Nations Church Centre and other venues. These sessions ranged from topics concerning human rights and MDGs to issues of food security, health and the environment and served as a platform for information sharing and provided additional opportunities for networking. Various members of the Pakistan NGO delegation spoke in NGO organised panels and events. Khawar Mumtaz (SG) spoke about customary practices and their impact on women’s reproductive health at the APWLD session titled “Addressing and Reaffirming Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Rights.” She also made a presentation on Women in Conflict Situations at the seminar organized by South Asian Women’s Watch (SAWW) and was part of the kick-off speakers in the dialogue on “Women’s Rights, Empowerment and Human Development” organised by SID and IDS Sussex for Vol 53.2 of the SID journal Development. Nighat Said Khan spoke at the session on women’s studies centres in a panel on the theoretical foundations of the women’s movement and the need to move academia closer to the movement in a dialogic frame. Following a series of panels, workshops, discussions and plenary sessions the Commission concluded on 12th March 2010, with the adoption of seven resolutions: Women, the Girl Child and HIV/Aids; Release
of Women and Children taken Hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned in armed conflicts; The Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women; Women’s Economic Empowerment; Eliminating Maternal Mortality and Morbidity through the Empowerment of Women; Strengthening Institutional Arrangement of the UN for support of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women by Consolidating the four Existing Offices into a Composite Entity (as advocated through the GEAR campaign), and Ending Female Genital Mutilation.

From a logistical standpoint, participation in the UN sessions was very difficult. This was mainly due to security concerns and the ongoing construction of new UN buildings. Registration and gaining access to ground passes took up to eight hours of queuing up for NGO delegates. The ground passes themselves did not make all areas accessible, and many of the events inside the UN required special passes, which were limited in number. Most NGO activities and parallel events in the Church Centre were overcrowded, so people were often turned away. There was a general level of frustration amongst NGO delegates because they were unable to attend discussions/events of their interest given the above constraints. A number of events organized by UN agencies and larger NGOs who had sufficient finances were held in hotels. Some of these sessions – especially those on globalization and the economy were particularly stimulating. The Pakistani delegates decided to cover as much ground as possible, by attending a variety of events, according to individual and collective interests, so that they could bring back a wide array of experiences and information to share with others in Pakistan.

There were also several caucuses meeting fairly regularly and trying to engage and lobby with the official delegates’, on issues such as SRHR, the new UN women’s gender entity, youth, etc. as well meetings of networks. Members of Pakistani NGOs present in New York participated in a range of these. However, the interaction between Pakistan’s official delegation and NGO delegates did not get formalised, partly because of the restrictions and access issues faced by the latter. In her feedback on the CSW 54, Ayra Inderyas observed that “this year UNCSW 54 lacked collaboration and coordination between Pakistani Women NGOs and the government.” Notably, in the past, NGOs have been able to lobby with their delegations on resolutions and documents that facilitate outcomes of conferences such as the CSW, subsequently providing inputs on language, and backup information and arguments for the official delegates. Overall, the various events and conferences in New York served as an important learning experience for those participating for the first time, and for others it was an opportunity to compare with previous UN conferences, especially with the FWCW in Beijing 15 years ago.
Built into the overall intent and design of a collaborative multilevel inclusive programme initiated by Shirkat Gah and the ASR Resource Centre, it was decided at the onset that all international processes would be connected to national realities. This interplay was considered necessary to ensure not only a more inclusive and representative international process but to provide an opportunity to work towards a common understanding and strategy within Pakistan. This envisaged a national consultation which reflected the diversity of the women’s movement and brought together women’s groups; women’s rights activists; NGOs; Members of Parliament and others who have played a role in earlier WCW processes prior to the international review processes as well as a coming together in a second national consultation after the final Beijing +15 Review by the UN in March 2010. While UNIFEM gave financial support for all regional and international participation to the events, ASR and SG made commitments to support the national consultations from their own funding sources.

The National Meeting held on 30th April-1st May 2010 held in Lahore was to share the discussions, processes and experiences with a larger community and to develop a collective understanding for future strategies. The meeting/consultation followed two interconnected formats. The first day focussed on formal sessions on experiences, analysis, key areas of concern and a sharing of international and national processes and plans. The new UN Gender architecture for women (GEAR) and UN mechanisms such as the role and relevance of UN Rapporteurs, UN Experts and international expert committees were also shared for a more inclusive understanding and access. The second day was devoted to a round table discussion to bring together the national and international streams and working towards a comprehensive and integrated approach which included an intensive session on a review/reflection of the women’s movement in Pakistan (see Annex 24).

The interest and participation in this meeting was higher than expected. Over 150 participants from across the country including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and
Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) attended. The selection emphasized the diversity of the movement and special attention was given to the inclusion of a younger generation of activists so that they could interact with those more familiar or those with specific expertise and responsibility. These included Members of Parliament; Ministers; Federal Advisors and Provincial Legislators which enhanced the proceedings and brought together micro, meso and macro level inputs.

**Introductory Session and Overview**

The opening session was jointly chaired by Shahnaz Wazir Ali, MNA and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and Yasmin Rehman, MNA and Advisor to the Federal Ministry of Women’s Development. It was moderated by Shagufta Alizai of Shirkat Gah.

Nighat Said Khan (ASR) and Khawar Mumtaz (SG) had the responsibility of presenting the overview and introducing the purpose of the meeting and round table. Khawar Mumtaz welcomed the participants and gave a brief update on the process and reiterated the background of the World Conferences on Women and the significance of the review process. She shared the statements made at the Asia and Pacific Forum in Manila in October 2009; the South Asian Declaration and the UN Review Documents and highlighted the areas of particular concern. These include discriminatory laws against women; violence against women; fundamentalism in the name of culture and tradition; climate change and its impact on sustainable development, food and nutritional security and livelihood; women’s representation in the new technologies and media; women and conflict; the internationalization of conflict; the war industry and ‘democracies in distress’.

Khawar Mumtaz further shared the concern that while the UN appears to be more inclusive the spaces for civil society are not only being physically restricted but CSOs are increasingly getting marginalized. As an example she shared the discouragement of CSO access to national delegations for lobbying and advocacy not only in terms of spatial arrangements but also the lack of logistical support. This makes it imperative, she argued, that we must make ourselves familiar with other UN and international mechanisms for instance Special Rapporteurs; UN Special Experts and CSO Expert Committees and to use mechanisms that may be more accessible.

Nighat Khan in her presentation located the UN Conference within the women’s movement in Pakistan especially emphasizing the dynamics and the connectivity of national and international processes. International processes, she argued, are not unrelated to national struggles since international decisions and mechanisms are the result of national realities and concerns. Member states of the UN decide
international agendas and not the other way around although international processes define universal parameters. Pakistan can proudly lay claim to having been a part of the initiatives and formulations of international processes and mechanisms. Illustrating this she dwelt on the role played by the government of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and particularly the First Lady Begum Nusrat Bhutto in being an active player in the First World Conference for Women in Mexico in 1975. Similarly the Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto played a key role in the 3rd World Conference in Beijing in 1995. The women’s movement in Pakistan can also take credit for propelling women’s concerns on to the national agenda as well as the role it has played at the regional and international level. National level, activism and advocacy have had a dynamic input into international processes and decisions.

In particular, her presentation gave an analytical overview of the Pakistani women’s movement and its relationship to the Government arguing that this relationship has oscillated between integrated, cordial, functional and hostile depending on the specificities of the government and the specificities and politics of different women’s groups. However, in the main, the politics of the movement has depended on the positions of the government and its commitment to women’s rights. While overall moments of extreme hostility, for example during the period of General Zia Ul Haq, were common to almost all women’s groups there was a general sense of partnership during periods when Benazir Bhutto was in power, while in other periods relationships with the government have not been homogenous or uncontested. Some groups for example maintained their distance during the Governments of the Pakistan Muslim League while others worked in varying degrees of partnerships. In the second term of the PML Government however most of the groups came together against the Constitutional Amendment being proposed by the PML which sought to bring religious and temporal authority within the mandate of the Prime Minister. The challenge by civil society provoked a vicious response by the Punjab PML Government which attacked women’s organizations and those led by women. At other times however, for example during General Musharraf’s regime, several supported and worked with his regime while others took the position that working with a military regime in any capacity gave it legitimacy. This vacillation by the State and Governments regarding women’s rights and democratic processes remain a challenge for the women’s movement since it must decide in each phase whether the interests of women are served by interventions in whatever spaces are available or to take positions that may prevent them from doing so. However despite the multiplicity of responses to the State and to specific governments the movement has maintained its struggle for women’s rights and has worked with a common purpose.

The Chair, Shahnaz Wazir Ali, expressed her gratitude to Begum Nusrat Bhutto and to Benazir
Ms. Yasmin Rehman, Co-Chair, reiterated the importance of the women’s movement adding that the government had ‘a lot to learn’ from it. She emphasized the commitment of the present government to women’s empowerment and to mainstreaming the participation of women in all spheres of public life. Ms. Rehman shared her concerns that women’s participation in the labour force in the formal, informal and home based sectors must be integral to all planning and agreed with Ms. Ali that an integrated approach was needed in which the government, public representatives and the women’s movement must play a role.

**Living the Process: Panel Discussion on the International Beijing +15 Review Process**

The first panel was also chaired by Shahnaz Wazir Ali and moderated by Shagufta Alizai. This opening session was a space for younger participants to share their experiences of the Manila, Delhi, and New York Reviews of Beijing +15. The panellists, Naureen Ilyas Butt of Shirkat Gah, Abida Swati of SUNGI and Sabiha Shaheen of Bargad participated in the international process through the SG-ASR collaboration and to that extent also provided a feedback to SG and ASR on its own programme.

Abida Swati from SUNGI shared her experiences of the Asia Pacific Forum held in Manila, the Philippines, in 2009. Giving highlights of the Forum, the range of activities and concerns and the overall atmosphere generated by 700 women coming together, she shared her own specific interests. A presentation by Nepal on the use of radio in trauma reduction and for dealing with disaster was particularly relevant to her work in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The need for more intensive peace initiatives, capacity building in peace processes and the role of civil society in
peace building were equally connected. At the same time the experience of multiple voices and experiences and levels of engagement brought home to her the relevance and need for national, regional and global networking.

Naureen Ilyas Butt as a member of Shirkat Gah was fortunate that she had been able to participate in all the events and processes nationally and internationally, but had been requested in this instance to give feedback on the South Asian Review held in Delhi, India in December 2009. Of particular interest to her was a sharing of experiences with women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India where she found several common concerns. South Asia has made some significant gains over the last 15 years as far as women’s rights are concerned however the challenges are still overwhelming particularly with dramatic deterioration as a result of increasing poverty, climate change and conflicts in the region.

Sabiha Shaheen of Bargad was particularly appreciative of her inclusion by SG and ASR in the process especially since there was a concerted effort by ‘senior’ activists to share their experience and ‘transfer their knowledge’ with younger participants. The introduction to the UN System and the process of lobbying at the international level was particularly enlightening. She highlighted her experience of the NGO Global Forum and the UN CSW in February-March 2010. The inclusion of youth and the attention given to their interests and challenges which were a focus through the whole process was not only exciting but also gave an opportunity to a younger generation of activists to network.

The moderator, Shagufta Alizai, read out the statements and declarations that were agreed to during the process at the many forums which was followed by an open discussion and further sharing of the experiences of other participants who had attended the NGO Forum in Manila; the NGO Forum in New York and the UNCSW Beijing +15 review. The Chair, Shahnaz Wazir Ali concluded the session by reflecting that the presentations and discussion reflected an underlying need to connect women’s rights with political processes. She recommended that individuals and civil society groups work actively to create forums where linkages can be made between bureaucratic systems of government, political systems and women activists. Co-Chair Yasmin Rehman similarly urged a wider participation from women both at a grassroots level and at the policy making level, urging groups and individuals to lobby the government for equal opportunities and accessibility to resources.

**Women and the Global Crises: Food Security, Climate Change, Resource Depletion and Livelihood - International and National Implications**

The second session was chaired by Khawar Mumtaz (Shirkat Gah). While discussing both the SAARC and the UN theme of climate change, Khawar felt that despite conferences and the National Conservation Strategy adopted in 1992, Pakistan still faced water, soil, agriculture and other climate change issues which are fast reaching a tipping point. In addition, she explained that women are significantly affected by environmental change which is exacerbated by climate change, particularly with reference to food security. However, it is difficult to gauge the exact impact of climate change on livelihood and its effects on the depletion of natural
resources as development interventions too can and do have an adverse effect on natural resources.

The panellists were Samina Nazir of PODA, Aqeela Naz of AMP and Bushra Khaliq of WWHL. Each made individual presentations reflecting the impact of the emerging challenges and spoke extensively on how their movements and organizations are addressing these. Introducing PODA, Samina Nazir discussed the specifics on rural women and the impact of climate change on their lives. Climate change, she argued, was a result both of environmental ‘natural’ disasters and because of a gradual deterioration of the environment that impact on food security and livelihood. Small farmers were critical to food security and the distribution of resources especially of land, assets and ownership was imperative for food security. Rural and other women are most open to organic agriculture and have strategies for survival which must be supported and encouraged.

Aqeela Naz of the AMP shared her experiences of the active involvement of women in the struggle for land rights in the Punjab and highlighted the crucial front line of ‘defence’ against the police and paramilitary forces that were sent to evict the tenants. This has led to a widespread tenant movement with over 500,000 women mobilized across several districts. Through public meetings, seminars, demonstrations, strikes and ‘long marches,’ the AMP has managed to raise a larger awareness of tenant rights and their demand that tenants be given land rights including land rights for women. While they have been supported by the PPP and the PML, little has been done to fulfil these political promises.

Bushra Khaliq of WWHL broadened the debate by focusing on the fisheries and forestry sectors while also raising the issue of women workers more generally. A just financial compensation and equal wages for women must be addressed and specific efforts made to insist that the Government of Pakistan provide a legal framework for the promotion and protection of women workers. The ILO Convention needed to be ratified and the definition of workers in the Industrial Relations Act should include home based workers.

Women, Peace and Security: The Interplay of International and National Processes and Plans

The third session chaired by Raheela Durrani, Minister of Law and Public Prosecution, Government of Balochistan and moderated by Nighat Said Khan (ASR) sought to understand the interplay of international and national processes regarding women, peace and security and specific experiences of women confronting conflict in their daily lives. Given that this panel was to bring the voices and experiences of ‘voices from below,’ every attempt was made to be as inclusive as possible and to bring together speakers reflective diverse realities. The speakers included Benazir Riaz (IDSP, Balochistan), Dr. Saba Almas (Johar Educational and Welfare Society Khanpur, South Punjab), Rehana Yasseen (PILER, Sindh), Mehwish Sabeen (Khwendo Kor, KPK), Maria Jabeen (Student, Gilgit-Baltistan) and Sumera Qureshi (ILO, AJK) who shared the specificities of conflicts that directly impacted on them.

Nighat Said Khan gave a historical and analytical overview of conflicts in Pakistan and the
impact of these on women. Pakistan, she argued was a unique state in that the geographic and political borders and boundaries were still not resolved. From the ongoing contestation of Sir Creek, Siachin and most importantly the former state of Jammu and Kashmir, major portions of the ‘borders’ between India and Pakistan are ‘Lines of Control,’ ‘Working Borders’ or ‘demarcations’ that are challenged by both countries. Towards the North West the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Durand line, is challenged by Afghanistan and border points between Pakistan and Iran continue to be ‘soft’ borders where the ‘other side’ is accessible. Equally unique is that all ‘nationalities’ or ethnicities transcend national borders and boundaries creating in some cases divided loyalties and affinities.

The Partition of India in 1947 was an extremely violent division with religious communities turning against each other. The number of those who perished or were maimed have still not been accurately calculated but figures suggest that the number of refugees range from a minimum of 6 million to 8 million. While the people of all communities were vulnerable, women bore the brunt of the violence. They were raped, suffered sexual mutilation, killed, abducted, abandoned, bartered, pressed into committing suicide, bartered, or forced into marriage.

In 1971, the violent suppression by the Pakistani Military of the democratic rights of the Pakistani citizens in East Pakistan included a systematic policy of sexual violence and the use of rape as an instrument of war. The specificities of the impact of conflict on women was further highlighted during the civil war in Afghanistan in the 1980s when over 6 million Afghans took refuge in Pakistan, a large proportion of whom were women.

Given this history, the women’s movement in Pakistan and the ASR Resource Centre in particular, continuously raised the urgency for Pakistan and the international community to address the specificities of women’s experiences of armed conflict and took the position that crimes against humanity and against women must not be given impunity and that the state and individuals must be held responsible even in retrospect. Working with the government of Pakistan this aspect was addressed in the National Report for the WCW in Beijing in 1995 in the chapter on Women and Armed Conflict. Taking this further Women’s Action Forum apologised to the women of Bangladesh ‘on its own behalf’ and the ASR Resource Centre took this further by demanding that the Pakistani military be publicly held responsible. In 1996, the Government of Pakistan proposed a SAARC working group on Women and Armed Conflict with input from the SAARC NGO Working Group. ASR was given the responsibility to move the process forward and was subsequently a part of the ongoing campaign at the regional and international level for the UN to address this important area of concern, to bring women’s experiences and voices into all peace processes, and for ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The international campaign by the women’s movement, civil society and key nation states such as Bangladesh propelled the UN to take note which resulted in the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (1325) as well as the subsequent resolutions (1820, 1888 and 1889).

Nighat Khan’s locating UN SCR 1325 within the context of Pakistan and highlighting the role
of women’s movement (and at certain points the government of Pakistan) in pressing for this area of concern to be addressed was to provide the linkages between national and international processes. It is this location, she argued, that makes the UN SCR 1325 relevant to our realities and our concerns and should give a sense of ownership and internalization given the part that Pakistan has played in the process.

The session was then given over to the panel for each panellist to share her own experiences and realities. Benazir Riaz from Baluchistan gave a poignant description of how the conflict in Baluchistan impacts on the lives of women. The military operation not only targets men but women also have been known to be targeted, arrested and tortured. When male members are killed, arrested, ‘disappear’ or forced to go into hiding, women are left to fend for themselves and their children with little access to skills, employment opportunities, or health facilities. Where there are opportunities for education the general state of insecurity prevents them from availing of these since the lack of security impacts on women’s mobility.

Mehvish Sabeen from the FATA area spoke at length about the impact of bomb blasts, target killings and armed conflict by the militants, the Taliban and the Pakistani army. Despite their dependence and vulnerability when male members are killed or maimed, women are never given compensation or provided support by the government in their own right and with agency. Women refugees, especially those displaced by the military action in FATA and more recently in Swat, find themselves further marginalized in terms of the distribution of goods, services and health facilities, and their mobility is restricted even further by a lack of space or privacy in refugee camps.

Sumera Qureshi speaking on Kashmir focused on women being caught in the cross fire between Pakistani and Indian forces on the Line of Control. Rape has also been reported although this has been difficult to verify since the military prevents access to the areas on both sides of the LOC. Divided families often impact on women to a greater extent since women are often cut off from their natal families. However, despite the specificities of the experiences of women in this long standing conflict, women are never included in peace processes or any discussions on the subject.

Maria Jabeen from Gilgit-Balistan took up the issue of the unresolved status of Jammu and Kashmir since it impacts directly on GB. The status of GB is still uncertain with considerable debate within AJK and GB, as well as within India and Pakistan, as to whether GB falls within the contested state of Jammu and Kashmir. This creates an anomaly since GB does not fall within the parameters of the AJK Government and nor is it a Federating province of Pakistan. The political and developmental ‘package’ recently ‘awarded’ to GB while addressing some aspects of autonomy does not fully empower the region. Women are seldom involved in any decision making processes and the issue of women being a part of long term resolution of the status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Rehana Yasmeen from Sindh spoke specifically about Karachi and the experiences of women impacted by various types of conflicts: national, ethnic, political, and because of land and other mafias. Although not directly targeted except in extreme cases the conflicts create a situation of insecurity, vulnerability and fear. Women are often not able to go to work and
since their families tend to be dependent on their earnings this negatively impacts on the family’s financial situation. Similarly, girls are often not able to go to school since parents are afraid to let them out of the home. The fishing community she added is directly threatened by the military since the army has taken over border areas and denied fisher folk access to water sources.

Dr. Saba Almas representing South Punjab raised the issue of the Wadera system and gave instances of women being tortured by landlords. Women have few rights or agency and those who demand rights (e.g. the right to inheritance) have been killed by family members. Of particular significance, she raised the issue of the rapid increase in religious seminaries and schools in which women are also ‘indoctrinated’ for Jihad. The burqa is rapidly becoming the norm and even women who formerly only covered their heads are now wearing the veil, both by choice or under pressure, but importantly since they feel threatened.

Raheela Durrani, Provincial Minister, Government of Baluchistan reflected on the presentations and the session. She reflected on how the fragile state of security of the nation had a psychological impact on the people, particularly women. It is a difficult time for all of us regardless of where we reside in Pakistan but at this point Baluchistan is very threatened and vulnerable both from within and from outside. Peace however seems difficult since there are so many contending forces that understanding the situation is a challenge in itself. Yet, she said, we must all be resolved to go forward together and try and reach out across our boundaries and identities for a peaceful resolution which includes the voices and agency of women.

International and National Processes and Plans (Specific Focus on the New UN Architecture for Women: GEAR) the Pakistan Plan of Action; Institutional Mechanisms.

The concluding session of the first day was chaired by Mehnaz Rafi (former MNA) and moderated by Hina Jilani (former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and member of NGO Expert Committee on Women, Peace and Security). The objective of the session was to inform the participants about international mechanisms, their roles and how they may be accessed.

Hina Jilani stated that women in Pakistan have always struggled for their rights including and especially the discriminatory legislation against women in the name of Islamization. Women’s Action Forum has been in the forefront of this struggle since 1981 when it took to the streets to press the point that women would not accept a second class status. Hina Jilani highlighted the relevance of international standards to national struggles, stating that governments are accountable to people when they ratify such instruments. National struggles cannot be disassociated from international mechanisms since international norms (despite several gaps that must be addressed) do set standards of justice and universality of rights.

UN Special Rapporteurs serve as regulatory bodies within a national context and are appointed and mandated by the UN Human Rights Council to work on behalf of the United Nations. Their
specific mandate is to investigate, monitor and recommend solutions to human rights issues. Effective working of the special mandate holders is reflected by links which they built with the civil society organizations. They are in effect, in a strong position to resolve issues and can support CSOs working for women’s and human rights; where Human Rights Council authority is contested by governments CSOs tend to turn to the special mandate holders. The women’s movement can strengthen UN mechanisms by giving inputs and supporting their reports and/or by addressing and highlighting areas that specific governments are not addressing.

Farida Shaheed, International Expert on Cultural Rights explained that she is the first person to be assigned this specific mandate by the Human Rights Council and is engaged in defining and developing its mandate. Special rapporteurs are individuals working on behalf of the United Nations and conduct fact finding missions to countries to investigate allegations of human rights violations and such violations are then sent to the respective government. Each country presents its report to the Human Rights Council every four years. NGOs can attend these sessions and present shadow reports.

Apart from Special Rapporteurs, the UN also has Special Representatives and Independent Experts. The Special Mandate Holders work on documentation of country specific issues, country visits and press releases. Special mandate holders can be and are invited by CSOs to their forums, where they freely and openly discuss issues.

Since the post of International Expert on Culture is a new category, Farida shared the ongoing debate on the definition of culture. Cultural rights have so far not been addressed by the UN and there is some confusion in the minds of many, including in the CSO community, of what cultural rights are. She stated that she held her first session with CSOs to bring to light the problems related to cultural rights and areas of concern and found the discussions very useful. Farida suggested that those approaching the UN in terms of cultural rights should do this through correspondence to the official address rather than at a personal level since the Special Expert can only take up issues if they are presented formally. There is considerable space for this since Special Mandate Holders are not a part of the UN system and yet carry weight with member countries.

Both Hina and Farida underscored the need for closer engagement in order to highlight issues and make authorities accountable. This can be undertaken at several levels: CSOs can write to Mandate Holders; send documentation and information; attend sessions as observers; request spaces to speak; write and present shadow reports and invite Rapporteurs and Special Mandate Holders for discussions.

Shabana Arif of Rozan made a presentation entitled New Gender Entity in UN Rationale: Process and Way Forward. Giving a brief history of the GEAR campaign she informed participants that in April 2006, women’s groups all over the world launched a global campaign for a new and strong women’s entity in the UN. Many individuals and eminent NGOs from Pakistan also supported this campaign. This was the time that the UN Secretary General initiated the reform of the UN Systems by setting up a high level panel on development, the environment and humanitarian assistance systems and Pakistan was co-chair of this panel. In November 2006, the panel submitted its report and recommended that an independent women’s agency should be established to strengthen UN Capacity by combining UNIFEM, INSTRAW,
OSAGI and DAW and that body should operate under the authority of Under Secretary General. Subsequent strategies, papers and non-papers during 2007-2009 went in favour of the new body. Shabana called for increased awareness and endorsement of CSOs and women rights groups for this initiative. For this the need was to lobby the government to endorse the body. She also suggested setting up of a committee which would organize a national consultation on the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) and present its recommendations to Government of Pakistan in support of the new entity in the UN System.

Saghir Bokhari of UNIFEM reiterated several of the areas addressed by Shabana. Sharing the limitations of UNIFEM and its marginalization within the UN system, he stressed the need for a UN entity that focussed on women with a similar mandate, authority and financial support as other UN agencies. While one can foresee challenges ahead in terms of support, political will and financial commitments we must all work together to foreground women’s concerns and realities across the UN system.

In her concluding remarks Mahnaz Rafi, the chair of the session, said that there was discrimination against women all over the world. Pakistan should take pride in the fact that Pakistani women have played such a major role in focussing national and international attention to the oppression of women. Women’s political participation and representation was extremely important and younger generations must take on the responsibility to continue with the struggle for equal rights and justice. We must collectively take a stand against extremism, violence and narrowing of spaces and women must come into the mainstream by being a part of formal political processes. She strongly advocated that women should join political parties and create a climate of change within the power structure.

Bridging the Streams: Towards a Comprehensive and Integrated Approach

The first session held on the second day of the meeting/consultation reiterated the Beijing +15 Review Process and reflected on the promises and commitments made by the Government of Pakistan in 1995 and subsequently. Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996 and at the same time it worked towards addressing the 12 areas of concern as identified in the BPfA; the NPA was approved in 1998. The implications and procedures of CEDAW were discussed in some detail since there appeared to be considerable confusion and duplication within the government and civil society given the multiple streams and processes being followed.

The Pakistan Government has signed/ratified many international commitments (CEDAW, MDGs, BPfA, etc.) with different reporting lines/departments, and donor engagement related to each is not always coordinated resulting in confusion and duplication of efforts. Since this multiplicity and the process of fulfilling the obligations are not generally understood considerable time was spent on discussing each with particular attention given to CEDAW and the CEDAW reporting process. Questions were raised on how inclusive the reporting processes had been and whether there was a larger ownership at the provincial government level and with civil society. There was agreement that the tendency has been to base reports and plans on consultations which
by and large do not bring multiple stakeholders and experts on board. Reports and National Plans are usually initiated by the UN and Government by engaging consultants who are often not familiar with the complexity of the issues and do not have the necessary background. Independent consultants are also not necessarily engaged in the issue and other than their terms of reference are not committed to the process or the outcome. Nor are they responsible for seeing through their suggestions to some logical conclusion. This is compounded by the fact that even when draft reports are prepared with the input of civil society and women’s organizations these groups and/or individuals may not be qualified to address specific issues. The tendency for depending on ‘closed groups’ with short term output objectives defeats the very purpose of making national plans since the plans then tend to circulate only within this small group. There was general agreement that ‘quick fix’ consultations, often with little or no notice for preparation or inclusion are worthless and non-conclusive, but unfortunately the constraints of funding and funding agendas determine both the processes and the agendas.

A major reason for this disconnect, exclusivity and somewhat slipshod process is the lack of understanding and capacity within Government and national mechanisms and dependence on UN and/or donor driven initiatives where the process, inclusivity, ownership and internalization is not considered essential. The ‘product’ no matter how cursory or mechanical is given priority over the process and there is fragmentation preventing comprehensive policies and plans since each focuses on only a part of the problematic. Even those UN Agencies committed to a comprehensive approach do not pursue a long term sustained process. Often these are in direct response to targets set by the UN rather than organic processes.

In this context the participants reflected on the importance and/or relevance of international agreements, international deadlines and indicators and their impact on national realities. This led to an interesting discussion and on the interplay of national and international commitments and frameworks. Picking up on the earlier discussion on the relevance of international standards it was agreed that these do provide markers at the national level. These are particularly relevant in the present changing scenario and the globalization of crises for instance the global financial crises; climate change; food security; the international ‘war on terror’; the feminization of poverty; intra and inter-state conflicts.

These standards are also not unrelated to national demands, commitments and obligations. The women’s movement, particularly since 1981 has played a major role in raising these issues at the national level and in the national context. Indeed, as discussed in the earlier sessions, the women’s movement in Pakistan has played a role at the regional and international level to work towards these standards and commitments. The women’s movement should therefore not only take ownership but should take pride in having played a role in putting women on to the international and national agenda.

While pressing the Government to work on a comprehensive national policy and plan, the women’s movement in collaboration with civil society should take the initiative to work towards formulating its own inputs. A comprehensive, multilevel, inclusive and well researched policy framework addressing a programmatic approach with strategies for implementation should be initiated by civil society. This would imply a collaborative approach and a process that is not time bound by specific project or time constraints. Civil society needs to develop its
own ground rules and ensure a transparency and a sharing of resources and expertise. Questions were raised on how this may be possible since competition among the UN, bilateral and funding community, and competition among CSOs for those resources often prevents joint positions and strategies. Some suggestions were a collective strategy to press donors to take a comprehensive approach. In the first instance there is a need for a national coordinating team. These teams must be developed from the grassroots to the national level and must be representative and inclusive. This must also be a reflective space to address both ‘our weaknesses and our strengths’ in order to move forward together.

**A Review/Reflection of the Women’s Movement**

The women’s movement in Pakistan has a dynamic and rich history. The combined experience, expertise, activism and commitment of women’s organizations, groups, forums, and individuals has led to a sustained struggle that has had an impact at the national level and has had an influence on other social movements. However, as in most countries, the mainstreaming of women’s concerns and empowerment especially since the WCW in 1995 has negatively impacted on the autonomy, self reliance and politics of the movement. While this ‘mainstreaming’ was one of the goals of the movement this has tended to subsume both the politics and the processes. De-politicization, donor dependency and project based activism usually propelled by UN or donor agendas and timelines has challenged the autonomy and impetus for a sustained self propelled movement.

The review and reflection on the women’s movement focused on areas that have been major concerns especially over the last 15 years. The autonomy versus integration debate; the dependence on funds; fragmentation; competition; project based and/or funded activism; collaboration; cooptation; elitism within the movement; the lack of linkages between the upper and lower echelons of the movement; the focus on policy and legislative changes with insufficient attention to implementation impediments; the lack of knowledge, analysis, conceptual understanding and political understanding and the disconnect between the public and the private spheres even in the lives of the more ‘radical’ feminists, were taken up again in these discussions.

The participants agreed that the above problematic required concerted attention. While the women’s movement has come a long way and had many successes, women continue to face discrimination, oppression and suppression at all levels. New and emerging crises, insecurity and violence which impact on women present even greater challenges. The women’s movement needs to address this in a comprehensive and sustained manner yet the discussion on how to do this remained inconclusive. There was agreement that the movement needed to cut across class, religious, ethnic and linguistic divides and that a strong movement was needed not only at the national but at the regional and global level. At the same time there is a need to systematically link the women’s movement to other social movements since other social movements regardless of how ‘radical’ in their own areas are still very patriarchal. The women’s movement itself is becoming more conservative either because it is caught in donor frames which may address social oppressions instead of rights, or because people are increasingly
turning inward especially in terms of religious location and patriarchal family structure. The ‘norm’ is no longer being challenged at the personal level and a retreat into the ‘known’ and the ‘secure’ overrides personal courage to live out one’s public positions.

Several experiences were shared of reaching a larger community though micro level initiatives such as sharing of data, documentation, information, posters etc., but no matter how widely this is done it is subsumed by the all pervasive media which even when it highlights women’s ‘issues’ continues to reinforce patriarchy. But ‘we ourselves are not informed enough’ and need to collectively work out how to bridge this information gap since it is only a well informed movement that can address present realities while anticipating emerging challenges. National and provincial political and governmental mechanisms; policy making processes; implementation institutions; and international mechanisms including the UN are often not understood impeding long term planning and strategizing.

A direct challenge by one participant who asked ‘what will happen to the movement when there are no funds’ put the problematic directly on the table. Some protested that the movement ‘would still continue’ even if there were no projects; others said they did not take funds anyway; but the question remained unaddressed since it was pointed out that even a reflection such as this one would not have taken place if the participants had not been funded to attend. This is a dilemma for all social movements at the national and global levels since even resistance is increasingly circumscribed by access to funds. This necessarily limits major challenges to the global and national status quo.

Despite these challenges and the constraints there was agreement that despite the fragmentation, competition and internal dissent within the movement, there is a coming together on key issues that concern women. This is a history and a reality to build on in the future and every effort must be made to continue to debate these key issues and to work collaboratively including devising a common strategy to proactively seek ways to go forward.
Annex 1: Template for the Survey on Activities in BPfA’s Critical Areas

Date:
Name of NGO:
Mailing address:
Email and phone numbers:
Contact person:
Person filling out this form:

**Beijing Platform for Action 2005-2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr#</th>
<th>Beijing Platform for Action: 12 Areas of Concern</th>
<th>Achievements</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Emerging Issues</th>
<th>Observations and Comments</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Women and Poverty</td>
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<td>Women and Health</td>
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<td>Women and Armed Conflict</td>
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<td>Women and the Media</td>
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<td>Women and the Environment</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>The Girl-Child</td>
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*Note: As Women and Disability is the cross-cutting theme, the organizations which are working on it could mainstream it in the 12 areas of concern.*
Annex 2: Practical Needs of Women

• Formal and informal education; teacher training
• Provision of health care for women and children
• Organisation of vaccination campaigns for children (polio) and women (tetanus toxoid)
• Training of traditional birth attendants especially in areas where skilled attendants are not available
• Family planning including sterilisation and safe abortion
• Provision of micro credit towards poverty alleviation
• Girl child focused programmes primarily in the education field
• Water conservation; rehabilitation of mangroves
• Legal aid for family/personal law (divorce, maintenance, child custody) as well as criminal cases (rape, forced marriages, trafficking)
• Women’s shelters
• Studies to back campaigns: Provincially-Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), inheritance, honour killing, child labour
• Investigative stories on women in newspapers
• Publications and documentaries on economy, globalization, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, IEC material on women’s health/RH, elections
• Responding to natural disaster with short term humanitarian aid and long term strategic interventions (e.g. local women managed ‘Women Friendly Spaces’)
Mr. President,

I have great pleasure in extending to you, on behalf of the delegation of Pakistan my sincere felicitations upon your unanimous election to guide the deliberation of this conference. Your election, Mr. President, is not only a tribute to a host country but also an acknowledgement of the valuable contribution of your great country, Mexico, in the promotion of peace and disarmament, a just and equitable economic order, and human welfare. Ever since our arrival in this city we have been overwhelmed by the traditional warmth and generosity of the people and government of Mexico.

It would be fitting here to compliment Mrs. Helvi Sipila, the first woman Assistant Secretary-General at the United Nations, and Secretary-General of the world conference of International Women’s Year, for the successful organisation of this world moot which is unique in the annals of the United Nations where women for the first time form the majority in the assembly.

May I also, Mr. President, take this opportunity to convey to all delegations represented here our deep appreciation for giving Pakistan the honour of being one of the Vice-President’s of the conference.

I wish to extend a warm welcome to the true representatives of the Vietnamese people whose women fought heroically side by side with their men to win freedom. Their participation in this conference reinforces our conviction that the struggle for equality and freedom will ultimately triumph all over the world in every aspect of human relations.

Pakistan deems it an honour to participate in this conference. It is indeed an event of great historical significance that we are gathered here to address ourselves not to a specific problem or a special area of human endeavour but to the conditions and potentialities of almost half of humanity. The question of women’s role has been engaging the attention of the world community for quite sometime, it now calls for urgent consideration of all its aspects and the formulation of action-oriented programmes.

As a country that has emerged from a colonial past we have much in common with our sisters and brothers in other developing countries. The bond of shared sufferings and exploitation places us firmly with other newly liberated countries now struggling to bring higher living standards to their peoples. Our march towards economic self-reliance and technological advancement has been impeded due to a combination of historical, political and other causes. Discrimination was the hallmark of colonialism. It proved most conducive to the suppression of women’s aspirations to participate in the political and economic endeavours of their notions and peoples. Generally, the colonial powers felt it in their interest to reinforce, and even establish, discriminatory structures in the colonial territories. Discrimination against women
was an essential element of this policy, yet the women of Pakistan have a world perspective. Our sympathy and solidarity with the third world does not make us insensitive to the needs of our sisters in the developed countries. Affluence brings problems of its own, the abundance of goods and services does not necessarily provide the greatest personal fulfilment. During this conference we expect to benefit from mutual exchange between delegates from both developed and developing countries.

Women’s subjugation in varying degrees in different societies and times is now the subject of a vast body of literature and research. It seems that through the ages we have lost what we once enjoyed - woman’s integration in the life of the community. In today’s world the stereotyping of men’s and women’s roles has resulted in the belief that the “Public World” is the preserve of men. Whatever the historical causes of this inequality we are not individually responsible for them but the present generation will be answerable for patterns taking shape in the future. Therefore, Mr. President, the holding of this world conference should have a catalytic effect in changing discriminatory attitudes about women’s status in society. It is time the world recognised that the equality of women in every sphere is a prerequisite to social progress and maturity.

The particular conditions which we seek to remedy are well identified in the documents prepared for the conference by the United Nations and its family of organisations. They result from the customs and beliefs which treat women as inferior human beings and exclude them from the mainstream of the political, social and economic processes of communities and nations.

This century has seen considerable progress towards an acknowledgement of the equality of the sexes; the constitutions, basic laws and other legislation of a great many countries now embody this principle. For this we are grateful to the progressive forces in many societies which have spearheaded the movement for equality. The United Nations system, in particular the Commission on the Status of Women, deserves special commendation in this regard. But the fact that the principle of equality has been only partially translated into practice has made it necessary for us to gather here for earnest deliberations.

Mr. President, development is for people, not for abstract goals of production and consumption. Yet we find in large areas of the world women by-passed both as producers and consumers. Women’s contribution to economic life is disregarded, in formal calculations, her labours are not quantified, her services in the home, the family and in agricultural work go unrecognised and unrewarded. How can she be integrated into the total development effort if her life is a round of unremitting, repetitive toil and labour? The total involvement of women in a dynamically active economic society requires an adequate infrastructure of health, maternity and child-care services. Practical measures are called for, if necessary through legislation to make women’s participation in development a reality. While we in the developing world seek to provide improved living standards for our people we wish to avoid the evils of over-consumerism prevalent in some of the technically advanced nations. Many traditional values are good and proven. The cohesion of the family, whether it is the nuclear family, the extended family or a modification of the two is integral to our way of life, it best protects the interests of the child and ensures respect and care for the aged. Pakistan’s attitude regarding the status
of women is determined by its Islamic moorings. Islam, which came as a religion of the oppressed against the oppressor raised women from a low and degraded status to a position of respect and honour in society. The same egalitarian spirit continues to guide us in Pakistan.

Pakistan is fully committed to the complete equality and integration of women into the development process. The people’s government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pledged to emancipate women and we are adopting all possible measures towards the realisation of this goal.

Our Constitution unequivocally safeguards the fundamental right of equality for women. It lays down and I quote “there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone.” This Article contains no limiting words or clauses and if on any account this fundamental right is flouted the women of Pakistan have recourse to the legal remedy through the superior courts.

Besides, the constitutional principles of policy provide that steps shall be taken to ensure the full participation of women in national life and the state shall protect marriage, the family, the mother and the child.

Significant measures have been taken in the implementation of these provisions. Today, women are taking part in our national politics and making valuable contribution to national decision-making processes. The impediments against them in administrative services have been removed. The effort has extended to our rural areas. A new sense of national responsibility and service is emerging among our women from their growing contribution and role in national reconstruction.

In my country, we are mobilising public opinion in support of the International Women’s Year’s objectives of equality, development and peace. We are endeavouring to foster new leadership especially among women living in the rural areas. Schemes for adult education, both at the governmental level and through the voluntary welfare organisations are already in progress. Efforts are under way to provide employment to illiterate women through multi-purpose community centres.

The Government of Pakistan also has a comprehensive ongoing population planning programme aimed at providing information and services to motivate couples to plan their families.

In Pakistan, all avenues of employment are open to women. To ensure co-ordination and relevance of programmes for women’s uplift the establishment of a national commission on the status of women is under consideration. But social change is a slow process. To involve our women fully into the political and economic life of the nation, we must overcome not only inhibiting customs and beliefs but also the constraints imposed by the paucity of resources, educational facilities, trained personnel and of infrastructure – in a word, under-development.

Mr. President, it will be axiomatic to say that all efforts towards ensuring women their rightful place in society demand peace and conditions of peace as well as a just world economic order. Efforts for social uplift of any group can make progress only in a world governed by the principle of the United Nations charter, a world free of conflicts, alien occupation, racism and colonialism. A fundamental problem facing mankind today is the imbalance in political and economic relationships among nations and within nations. Prestige still resides in the possession of immense arsenals of destruction, sufficient to obliterate civilization on this earth many times
over, while a part of humanity is preoccupied with the uncertainties of the consumer society, the vast majority of human beings live on the margin of survival, deprived of sustenance by the structures of economic exploitation and domination. This unequal relationship is repeated in microcosm within countries as well.

The colossal expenditure on arms is an outrage of our times and makes a mockery of all talk of equality, development and peace. It is women who suffer most the aftermath of repeated brutal wars which have not yet solved any of our problems. Perhaps the elusive human dream of peace can be realised if the world’s women join together in an international sisterhood in the cause of peace and disarmament.

Our struggle, Mr. President, must therefore be launched on two fronts simultaneously. On the international plane, women must foster the trends towards peace and international security. Our decisions must also endorse the establishment of an equitable and national economic order which serves the interests not of a few privileged nations, but the entire international community.

Many great world issues have been raised and yet more will be raised in the course of this conference. Let our discussion not degenerate into mere inconclusive debate. The improvement of women’s status cannot await the solution of every other related problem; we have to immediately launch specific programmes at every level. A multi-pronged attack on problems of illiteracy, disease and want is imperative although to most of us these will be interim solutions till the larger issues of world peace and economic justice are settled.

This conference is a challenge to our sincerity and determination in the women’s cause where there are no uniform solutions for breaking the vicious circle of under-education, unemployment and low social participation by women. Cultural differences must be respected; diversity in aspirations should be taken note of. Let there be a greater sharing between countries at various levels of development on strategies and techniques to bring about women’s total integration into society. The United Nations and its agencies can play a useful role in accelerating this process.

To achieve targets that will be endorsed at this conference more than just equality of treatment and opportunity will be needed. We will indeed require a vast catching up operation.

In our strivings together to reach harmony and consensus at this historic conference where men and women from all countries and cultures, from countries large and small, have gathered, the differences amongst us need not be over-emphasised. The common human aspirations should be sought and strengthened.

Our energies should be concentrated on the plight of those lowest in the social and economic scale in every community. Not just on the needs of the articulate minority. Only a strong base can support a lasting super-structure. The vision of a better tomorrow for the men, women and children of this planet is before us. Let us make clear to the world that the goals to which we are here dedicated are not merely a reaction to the centuries of discrimination and oppression that women have suffered, but form a port – vital component – of humanity’s struggle for a better life on earth.
Annex 4: **Agenda: Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future**

**National Consultation on Beijing +15.**  
**10th-11th September, 2009**  
at Ambassador Hotel, Lahore.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>10th September, 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session I:</strong> Setting the Context</td>
<td>Chair/Moderator Shahnaz Wazir Ali/ Salma Waheed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 - 09:30</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30 - 09:35</td>
<td>Poem by Kishwar Naheed</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:35 - 10:00</td>
<td>Welcome and overview of the Beijing process in Pakistan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 - 10:30</td>
<td>International and national interface.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>Open discussion on women’s movement/ organized struggles; achievements and lessons learnt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 - 11:15</td>
<td>Tea Break</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session II:</strong> Confronting Crises; Globalization, Poverty and Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15 - 11:45</td>
<td>Impact on Agriculture, Rural Economy and Women: Najma Sadeque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 - 12:00</td>
<td>Women in the Formal and Informal Economy: Discussant Zeenat Hassam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:15</td>
<td>Home-based workers: Discussant Aqsa Khan</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Khawar Mumtaz</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 - 01:15</td>
<td>Open Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>01:15 - 02:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session III:</strong> Confronting Crises</td>
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<td>02:30 - 03:00</td>
<td>Democracy and Rule of Law: Hina Jilani</td>
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<tr>
<td>03:00 - 03:15</td>
<td>Local Government and Women: Discussant Salman Abid</td>
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<tr>
<td>03:15 - 03:30</td>
<td>Minority Perspective: Ayra Inderyas</td>
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<tr>
<td>03:30 - 04:30</td>
<td>Open Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Farida Shaheed</td>
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<tr>
<td>04:30</td>
<td>Tea Break</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
<td>11th September, 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session IV:</strong> Confronting Crises</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 - 09:30</td>
<td>Confronting Crises; Interface of inter and intra State Conflicts: Saba Khattak</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30 - 09:45</td>
<td>‘Talibanisation’: Discussant Nazish Brohi</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:45 - 10:00</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons: Discussant Rukhshanda Naz</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 - 11:00</td>
<td>Open Discussion</td>
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Annex 5: List of Speakers

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Najma Sadeque</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Zeenat Hissam</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Aqsa Khan</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Hina Jilani (UN Rapporteur; UN Committee Member for GEAR; Member of UN Expert Committee on Women, Peace and Security)</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Salman Abid</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Ayra Inderyas</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Saba Khattak</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Rukhshanda Naz</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Nazish Brohi</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Nafisa Shah (Member of National Assembly, Chair of the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), General Secretary of the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Saima Ashraf</td>
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Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future

National Consultation on Beijing +15

Organized by ASR Resource Centre and Shirkat Gah Women’s Resource Centre

11 September 2009

PRESS RELEASE

Fifty civil society organizations from across the country gathered in Lahore on September 10 and 11, 2009 and expressed grave concern at the multiple crises facing Pakistan today, and urged deepening democracy in the political as well as social culture as the solution.

The participants pointed out that armed conflicts in Pakistan are not a new phenomenon and current militancy has a historical continuity and its consistent festering presence has resulted in a societal acceptance for violence. While condemning the Taliban’s extreme brutal attacks on citizens, they also urged a more vigilant inspection and accountability of state actions that respond to militancy such as military operations, noting that solutions like supporting tribal lashkars can also backfire. Recognizing the increasing social conservatism, they urged the need to address social injustices and inequalities that led to support of militants. Response to IDPs needed to include all displaced person, and women’s needs not ignored.

They noted that local governments were a vehicle for access and incubating future political leadership. Understanding the need for introducing reforms within the system, they suggested that they are an integral part of democratic society and should accordingly be fixed and not dismantled.

For democracy to function, it must be understood as an on-going process based on rule of law, and the laws should in turn be based on basic human rights. Biased laws cannot be upheld, such as those that discriminate against minorities and set the stage for Gojra-like incidents.

The meeting also noted with alarm that Pakistan has been declared one of few countries to be at extreme risk in terms of food security. This means Pakistan is more severely threatened by starvation than either India or Bangladesh. Instead of leasing out massive tracts of land to foreign entities or countries and splurging on providing them security, land should be distributed for subsistence farming to peasants, for which even an acre each is enough. They urged the state to recognize women as key agricultural producers in all statistical data, policy formulation and to review the agricultural policy to ensure protection of small farmers.

Civil society also urged social security and protection of women in the informal economy, including 1.34 million women workers in the urban areas, demanding that they should not be
discriminated against on the basis of their sex and should have the right to form associations and collective bargaining, including in export processing zones and economic reconstruction zones.

Noting the killing of women with impunity and the role of jirgas in such instances, they demanded that judiciary be sensitized to violence against women and establishment of special courts and shelters under the umbrella of one singular legal system and abolishment of all parallel justice systems like jirga and panchayats, while elected public representatives should be responsible for following up all such cases of violence against women.

### Annex 7: List of Participants

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<th>Participants sponsored by UNIFEM</th>
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<td>1. Tasneem Ahmed</td>
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<td>2. Shagufta Alizai</td>
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<td>3. Nargis Batool</td>
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<td>4. Arfana Begum</td>
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<td>5. Ayra Indreyas</td>
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<td>6. Leela Ilyas Kalpana</td>
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<td>7. Nighat Said Khan</td>
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<td>8. Kishwar Naheed</td>
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<td>9. Rakhshanda Naz</td>
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<td>10. Naila Qadri (was unable to attend at the last minute)</td>
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<td>11. Najma Sadeque</td>
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<td>12. Sabiha Shaheen</td>
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<td>13. Humaira Mumtaz Shaikh</td>
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<td>14. Abida Swati</td>
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<tr>
<th>Participants sponsored by Shirkat Gah</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Mohammad Alamgir</td>
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<td>2. Sara Ali</td>
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<td>3. Naureen Ilyas Butt</td>
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<td>4. Kausar S. Khan</td>
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<td>5. Arifa Nazle</td>
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<td>6. Shabana Waheed</td>
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Annex 8: Agenda of the APWW NGO Forum, Manila

Asia Pacific NGO Forum on Beijing +15
Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future
21 – 24 October 2009
Miriam College
Katipunan Road, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines

21 October 2009 (Wednesday)

13:30 - 17:00 Visit to Disaster Stricken Areas (optional / limited slots)
19:00 - 21:30 Welcome Reception and Cultural Show - Cafetorium, 2nd floor

22 October 2009 (Thursday)

09:30 - 10:15 Opening Program - Marian Auditorium
Opening Rites
Welcome Address: Patricia Licuanan - President, Miriam College, Convenor, Asia Pacific NGO Forum on Beijing +15
Introduction of Keynote Speaker: Leticia Ramos-Shahani - Dean, College of International, Humanitarian and Development Studies Miriam College
Keynote Address: Noeleen Heyzer - Under-Secretary-General, United Nations, Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

11:00 - 12:30 Plenary 1: Feminisms Through Generations – Part I
Moderator: Patricia Licuanan - Chairperson, UN Commission on the Status of Women, 1994-1996
Speakers: Leticia Ramos-Shahani - Secretary General, Third World Conference on Women, Nairobi, Kenya, 1985; Nighat Said Khan - ASR Resource Centre (Pakistan); CaiYiping, Isis International (China)
On Video: Mitchiko Nakamura - Japan Women’s Watch (Japan); Kamla Bhasin - South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers (India); Sumalee Chartikavanij - Thai Women Watch (Thailand); Claire Slatter - DAWN (Fiji); Yayori Matsui (In Memoriam) Asia-Japan Women’s Resource Center (Japan)

12:30 - 13:00 Formal Opening of Asia Pacific Women’s Bazaar
Grade School MMJ Court

13:00 - 15:30 Plenary 2: Feminisms Through Generations – Part II
Moderator: Anupama Sekhar - Culture Dakshinachitra Heritage Museum of the Madras Craft Foundation (India)
Speakers: Emee Lei Albano - United Nations Population Fund (Philippines); Satsuki Murase - University of Sacred Heart (Japan); Eriko Tanno - Japan Women’s Watch (Japan); Shuchi Karim - Women and Gender Studies Department, University of Dhaka (Bangladesh); Jill Bosro - APO Resource Center (Papua New Guinea)
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 - 17:00</td>
<td><strong>Parallel Workshops</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>17:30 - 21:00</td>
<td><strong>Herstory: Exhibition of Asia Pacific Films on Women</strong></td>
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<td><strong>23 October 2009 (Friday)</strong></td>
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<td>09:00 - 10:30</td>
<td><strong>Plenary 3: An Agency for Women in the UN, At Last!</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong></td>
<td>Bandana Rana - <em>Saathi</em> (Nepal)</td>
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<td><strong>Speakers:</strong></td>
<td>Charlotte Bunch - <em>Centre for Women’s Global Leadership</em> (USA); Sharon</td>
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<td>Bhagwan Rolls - <em>femLINKPACIFIC - Media Initiatives for Women</em> (Fiji); Tahira</td>
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<td>Abdullah - <em>Human Rights Activist</em> (Pakistan); Gigi Francisco - <em>Development Alternatives</em></td>
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<td><em>with Women for a New Era</em> (Philippines)</td>
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<td>11:00 - 12:30</td>
<td><strong>Plenary 4: Gender in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong></td>
<td>Sylvia Ordoñez - <em>Center for Asia Pacific Women in Politics</em> (Philippines)</td>
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<td><strong>Speakers:</strong></td>
<td>Jean D’ Cunha - <em>Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM East &amp; Southeast Asia Regional Office</em></td>
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<td>(Thailand); Mariko Saito - <em>Global Gender Climate Alliance</em> (Japan); Prativa Chhetri</td>
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<td><em>Asia Pacific Regional Office, World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters</em> (Nepal);</td>
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<td>Feri Lumampao - <em>Approtech Asia</em> (Philippines)</td>
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<td>14:00 - 15:30</td>
<td><strong>Sub-regional Workshops and Open Space</strong></td>
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<td>15:30 - 17:00</td>
<td><strong>Parallel Workshops</strong></td>
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<td>17:30 - 21:00</td>
<td><strong>Herstory: Exhibition of Asia Pacific Films on Women</strong></td>
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<td><strong>24 October 2009 (Saturday)</strong></td>
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<td>09:00 - 10:30</td>
<td><strong>Plenary 5: Gender and Human Security in Situations of Conflict and Post-Conflict</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong></td>
<td>Carole Shaw - <em>JERA International</em> (Australia)</td>
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<td><strong>Speakers:</strong></td>
<td>Rukhshanda Naz - <em>Aurat Foundation</em> (Pakistan); Irene Santiago - <em>Mothers for Peace</em> (Philippines); Naeemah Khan - <em>Fiji Women's Rights Movement</em> (Fiji); Ambika Satkunanathan - <em>Women &amp; Media Collective</em> (Sri Lanka); Mu Sochua - <em>Member of Parliament</em> (Cambodia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:30</td>
<td><strong>Parallel Workshops</strong></td>
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<td>13:00 - 15:00</td>
<td><strong>Caucus on the Final Draft of the Asia-Pacific NGO Statement and Strategy</strong></td>
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<td>Little Theater, Paz Adriano Hall</td>
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<td>15:00 - 16:30</td>
<td><strong>Plenary 6: Beyond the Crises: Forging Ahead with Development Alternatives</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong></td>
<td>Marina Durano - <em>DAWN</em> (Philippines)</td>
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<td><strong>Speakers:</strong></td>
<td>Liu Bohong - <em>All China Women’s Federation</em> (China); Tea Soentoro - <em>NGO Forum on ADB</em> (Indonesia); Gita Sen - <em>DAWN</em> (India)</td>
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<td>16:30 - 18:00</td>
<td><strong>Adoption of the Conference Statement</strong></td>
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<td>Marian Auditorium</td>
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<td>19:00 - 21:30</td>
<td><strong>Closing Dinner and Cultural Show</strong></td>
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<td>Cafetorium, 2nd floor</td>
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Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

What a joy to see a room filled with old friends and so many people dedicated to make a difference in women’s lives.

But what a difference 15 years has made. Fifteen years ago, I was here in Manila organizing the first Asia Pacific NGO Forum in preparation for the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. We came out with the first Asia Pacific NGO Action Plan.

The Fourth World Conference in Beijing was seen to be one of the largest conferences on women. But it was not just a conference on women; it was the women’s conference on the world, and it was driven by the Asia-Pacific women. We saw the world through women’s eyes and we came up with an agenda of women’s empowerment.

Let me highlight some of the achievements since Beijing, because women did not stand still after the conference. But before we celebrate our achievements, I want us to remember the hard work and struggle that led us here. For fifteen years we have worked with a wide range of partners to advance women’s human rights, to empower women in an unequal region, to help women access social and economic opportunities, and to assist countries to achieve societies that are freer of violence, poverty and discrimination.

We could never have imagined when women from Asia-Pacific called on their governments to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that we would today have all but four countries in the region having ratified CEDAW.¹ Because of this Convention, women have full citizenship rights enshrined in the constitutions of countries like Afghanistan. Laws and policies are being adopted to strengthen women’s economic security and rights in such vital areas as decent employment, and access to credit and markets. Several countries in the region such as Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines in Southeast Asia; and India, Nepal and Bangladesh in South Asia now have National Action Plans to combat violence against women.

¹ All countries in the Asia Pacific region have ratified CEDAW except Iran, Nauru, Palau and Tonga.
We could never have imagined how investing in women’s leadership and participation has brought about economic and social transformation in so many countries. Quotas or other affirmative measures have been adopted to increase women’s representation in political decision-making in a number of countries, such as Afghanistan, Indonesia, and Timor Leste. We could never have imagined that Nepal, following more than 10 years of internal strife would be among the only three countries in the Asia Pacific region that have achieved the minimum 30% representation of women in national Parliaments.

Who would have imagined when we urged the UN to recognize violence against women as a human rights violation that these issues would now be addressed on national, regional and international agenda? We could never have imagined that governments in the region would introduce legislation on domestic violence and establish commissions to address violence against women. Neither could we have imagined that so much attention would be given to awareness-raising, prevention, and the role of men and boys.

These changes happened because of the unswerving commitment of millions of women and men who share a vision of more equitable societies, where daughters have the same chances as sons, where women live safe from violence, poverty and discrimination.

But we are still a long way from achieving that vision, and there is so much that must still be done. We have met every five years and the whole issue is still implementation and accountability to women. What do I mean by accountability to women? There are two essential elements to gender responsive accountability:

First, women must be included in systems of oversight at every level: Gender responsive accountability institutions must ensure that decision-makers answer to the women who are most affected by their decisions. This means that women must be entitled to ask for explanations and justifications – they must be legitimate participants in public debates and performance assessments.

Second, the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment must be included in the standards against which the actions of power-holders are measured. Power holders must answer for their performance in advancing women’s rights. The standards of due diligence in holding the public trust must include gender equality as a goal of public action.

Accountability for gender equality must therefore happen on multiple fronts. It must happen in translating policies to gender responsive governance. It must happen in the delivery of public services, the playing out of market dynamics, access to justice, gender-responsive budgeting, and in international assistance for development and security.

There are obviously still many development, equality and security gaps to be addressed. Unfortunately, those gaps have to be filled in the context of the multiple threats to development and freedom – finance, climate change, disparities, and the rise of extremism. We therefore need to strengthen the accountability agenda and be aware of these multiple threats.

Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

The world economy is going through an unprecedented period of uncertainty. As the economic
crisis unfolds it is estimated that as many as 24.8 million people in the Asia-Pacific region could lose their jobs. Women comprise the majority of affected workers in the manufacturing sector – they constitute the majority of low-skilled workers in labour-intensive manufacturing industries, such as textiles and apparels, leather products, and electronics. Also affected are migrant workers – women form nearly two-thirds of the Asian migrant population. These are areas that traditionally lack job security and other benefits such as health care, retirement packages and retrenchment allowances. Asia-Pacific has the second highest ratio of employed women of working age in the world at 49 percent. Whether as farmers, factory workers or home-based businesspersons, women’s employment is increasingly taking place at the heart of the global supply chain. Women have, in fact, emerged as the flexible labour force par excellence. As temporary, seasonal, contract laborers, women are unlikely to be covered by formal unemployment insurance or social protection schemes.

Based on the worst case scenario, ILO has estimated that an additional 9 million women in the region will become unemployed in 2009 as a result of the crisis. This would bring the total number of unemployed women in the Asia Pacific to around 38 million this year under the same scenario. Millions more will experience rising income insecurity as the impacts of the crisis continue to be felt regionally.

Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

Extreme climate events and natural disasters such as drought, cyclones, typhoons, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis are becoming more frequent, causing death and contributing to the destruction of crops and livelihoods. We have seen the devastation caused by the typhoons that hit our host country, the Philippines recently. I wish to extend my deep condolences to the Government and people of the Philippines for the loss of loved ones. Our prayers are with them during this difficult time of mourning, healing and reconstruction.

The number of people affected by natural disasters in our region is nearly 50 percent more than the global average. While climate change will undoubtedly affect everyone, women are among the most highly impacted due to gender-based division of labour and existing gender inequality. Women and children are 14 times more likely to be victims of natural disasters than men in societies where gender inequalities exist, thus further challenging MDG 3 targets.

Despite these impacts, women are not just helpless victims. They are powerful agents of change and their full participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and initiatives is indispensable. The upcoming climate change negotiations present an opportunity for greater participation of women in devising gender sensitive strategies.

We have five years left before the deadline for achieving the MDGs. Asia Pacific has made substantial progress in some areas. The greatest success of the region as a whole has been with freeing more than 350 million people from extreme poverty between 1990 and 2004. The region is an early achiever in reducing gender disparities in primary and tertiary education. Health has improved with more children surviving beyond the age of five. Malnutrition has fallen steadily. Many countries have achieved 100 percent net primary school enrolment. The region has also taken positive steps towards gender equality in schools and in the workplace.
However, with only five years left, many MDGs associated with women’s lives are not met, especially maternal mortality. The region accounts for half of the world’s maternal deaths, with 250,000 women dying each year during child birth or from pregnancy related complications. There are disturbing gender disparities and widespread discrimination against women and girls in the workplace. Asia-Pacific loses between $42 and $47 billion dollars a year because of restrictions on women’s access to employment. Up to $17 billion dollars a year are lost in the region due to gender gaps in education. Only 13 countries have parliaments in which more than 20% of representatives are women, with New Zealand and Nepal having the highest rate at 33.6% and 33.2% respectively. ² Few countries will thus reach a critical mass of 30 percent by 2015.

I am particularly concerned about the continuing violations of women’s rights. The rise of extremism in the name of culture has led to the closing of spaces for women and to an increase in violence against women. We have to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, as well as all Security Council resolutions affecting women’s lives.

What are some of the actions we can take to turn these challenges into an opportunity to advance women’s economic security and rights in the region?

(i) Gender equality and women’s rights must be included amongst standards against which public actions are assessed. Furthermore, women and their allies must be directly engaged in accountability and oversight processes. These include mechanisms such as consultations on national development spending priorities, committees and user group reviews of the distribution of public or natural resources.

(ii) Women need to be present at all levels of decision-making – in government, the economy, and at the community level. Setting up temporary special measures such as quotas for women at national and local government levels, on corporate boards, and in public administration is the fastest route to overcoming embedded resistance to women’s leadership.

(iii) Achievement of gender equality and protection of women’s human rights require governments to make appropriate allocations of resources. More emphasis needs to be placed on gender-responsive budgeting and tracking to strengthen implementation and accountability for gender equality as part of the regular budget processes. A number of countries in the Asia Pacific region made important progress in this area before the crisis – efforts are now required to ensure these gains are not lost. Equally important is insisting on strong and effective public expenditure monitoring systems to ensure that budgetary allocations reach the intended groups.

(iv) There is need to understand how gender discrimination and inequality nurture and sustain women’s experience and risk of poverty, and to develop a strategy to eliminate it. Such a strategy must empower women to take advantage of employment and income opportunities in the global economy, ensure their right to own land and property, improve their access to markets and credit, provide gender-specific social services, and broaden social protection. Above all, it means recognizing and valuing the work that women do, so that development strategies will include investing in women’s entrepreneurial and labour market skills rather than depending on

women to pick up the social costs of market-driven growth.

(v) It is important to integrate gender perspectives within every dimension of justice and for women to participate in shaping justice frameworks and rule of law institutions in ways that promote their human rights, legal equality and inclusion. In this regard, formal and informal justice systems must address gender biases in their normative, procedural and cultural dimensions. They must also address structural and systematic injustices, such as the political, economic and social inequalities that are the frequent underlying cause of violence and conflict.

(vi) Support to women’s organizing — including organizing home-based and sweatshop workers, market and cross-border traders, migrant women workers and women service providers of all kinds — is critical to create the space needed to change policy. Government and international organizations must make complementary changes so that ways of organizing the global economy recognize people as providers of unpaid care for one another and not just as producers of marketable commodities.

Women want a world in which inequality based on gender, class, caste and ethnicity is absent from every country and from the relationships among countries. Women want a world where fulfillment of basic needs becomes basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Where women’s unpaid work of nurturing, caring and weaving the fabric of community will be valued and shared equally by men. Where each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity. Where progress for women is recognized as progress for all.

Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that you will be able to come up with a visionary outcome. As Under Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, I will ensure that whatever outcome from this meeting will be presented at the official Beijing +15 Ministerial Review Meeting to be held in Bangkok in November 2009. I also hope that you will be able to give thought on the direction of the new gender entity for the UN.

By coming to this meeting, we have reaffirmed the women’s movement in Asia Pacific once again. I have been a part of this movement for most of my adult life. The one thing I know is that it is a demanding movement. But also one that blends challenge, joy and generosity of spirit in our commitment to make the world free from want, free from fear, and free from discrimination. There is no turning back. Let us keep moving forward.

I thank you!
Annex 10: List of Participants

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<th>Participants sponsored by UNIFEM</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Shagufta Alizai</td>
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<td>2. Bushra Gohar</td>
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<td>3. Rakhshanda Naz</td>
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<td>4. Salma Waheed</td>
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<td>5. Maliha Zia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Naureen Ilyas Butt</td>
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<td>2. Kausar S. Khan</td>
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<td>3. Nighat Taufiq</td>
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Annex 11: Agenda of the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes

16-18 November 2009, Bangkok

REVISED ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. **Opening of the session**
The programme for the opening ceremony will be announced in due course.

2. **Election of officers**
A chairperson, vice-chairpersons and a rapporteur will be elected.

3. **Adoption of the agenda**
The provisional agenda will be considered and adopted.

4. **Accountability for gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Asia-Pacific region: gender-responsive planning and public spending**
Under this agenda item, the Meeting will have before it an overview of key issues related to financing and accountability for gender equality and women’s empowerment (E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/INF/3). Specific issues related to this theme will be presented in a panel discussion.

5. **Highlights of progress and challenges in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action: good practices, obstacles and new challenges**
The Meeting will have before it a document entitled “Review of the
implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the ESCAP region” (E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/2), which provides a summary of key areas of progress and challenges for countries in the region within the last five years in the context of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (June 2000). Delegations are expected to deliver their country statements under this agenda item.

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<th>Responses to the economic crisis—women’s economic security and rights</th>
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<td>The Meeting will have before it document E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/3. The document: (a) addresses the impact of the economic crisis on women; (b) analyses policy responses to the crisis, including gaps and challenges; and (c) identifies opportunities in the region to address systemic imbalances and make development more inclusive. Specific issues related to this theme will be presented in a panel discussion.</td>
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<th>7.</th>
<th>Closing gender gaps in achieving the Millennium Development Goals</th>
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<td>The Meeting will have before it document E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/4. The document assesses progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the region from a gender perspective. It identifies persisting challenges and gender gaps in progress towards the Goals, and provides examples of how the region can achieve the Goals from the perspective of human rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. Specific issues related to this theme will be presented in a panel discussion.</td>
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<td>The Meeting will have before it document E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/INF/4. The document provides an overview of general trends in progress with regard to implementation of the Convention, including practical measures that countries in the region are taking to implement the Convention and to ensure women’s equality in all spheres and at all levels. The document also identifies challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed to ensure further progress. Specific issues related to this theme will be presented in a panel discussion.</td>
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<th>9.</th>
<th>Regional campaign to end violence against women</th>
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<td>The Meeting will have before it document E/ESCAP/BPA/2009/INF/5. The document provides a rationale for an Asia-Pacific campaign to end violence against women, to serve as the regional component of the Secretary-General’s global campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women. Specific issues related to this theme will be presented in a panel discussion.</td>
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<th>10.</th>
<th>Adoption of the communiqué</th>
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<td>The Meeting shall adopt a communiqué prepared by a drafting committee.</td>
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<th>Closing</th>
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Annex 12: Welcome Address by Dr. Noeleen Heyzer
(Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Secretary of ESCAP)

High-level Intergovernmental Meeting (HLM) to review the regional implementation of
the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

16 November 2009, Bangkok

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to address you this morning and to welcome you here to ESCAP. What a joy to see so many old friends and colleagues, people who are committed to making a difference in women’s lives.

Most of us participated in the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. We turned it into a conference where we looked at the world through women’s eyes and demanded gender equality. The outcome of the conference was the Beijing Platform for Action - the women’s empowerment agenda - a concrete and visionary strategy to achieve equality for women.

Achievements since Beijing

Next year the Beijing Platform turns 15. What has changed in these 15 years? The Asia Pacific region has a lot to be proud of.

The Platform’s sister, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW, has now been adopted by every country in our region but four.

Countries such as Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand already have, or are in the process of developing, National Action Plans to combat violence against women.

Nearly all countries across our region have established a singular mechanism within their governments, such as an Office for Women, to advance women rights.

Governments are increasingly valuing the importance of gender sensitive policy making in economic and social development. Some are even promoting it as “smart economics.”

In September of this year the General Assembly agreed to strengthen the United Nations’ focus on gender equality. A composite entity will be established, with its own Under-Secretary-
This is a great achievement because finally women’s rights are accorded the same status and legitimacy as other issues on the United Nations agenda. It is testament to the dedication and resilience of many people in this room. It was a hard and long fight, but we have won.

We meet here today to celebrate, most of all, that these advancements are creating real and improvements to the lives of millions of mothers, sisters, daughters and granddaughters across the Asia Pacific region.

**Overcoming persistent challenges**

As we rejoice in the Platform’s coming of age, the achievements and the progress, we must continue with its implementation and ask for accountability for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite our solid progress over the past 14 years, persistent obstacles and challenges remain. More than one in three women around the world are beaten or coerced into sex in the course of her lifetime. The rise of extremism in the name of culture has led to the closing of spaces for women. We must increase our efforts to ensure that all victims of violence are protected, all perpetrators of violence are held accountable, and that future violence against women is prevented through the education of young men.

The Asia Pacific accounts for half the world’s maternal deaths, with one-quarter of a million women dying each year during child birth or from pregnancy related complications. These fatalities must be prevented through the increased availability of maternal health services.

There is still so little accountability to women. Women must be included in systems of oversight at every level. Only two countries in the Asia Pacific, New Zealand and Nepal, have national parliaments in which more than 30 per cent of representatives are women. Women must be legitimate participants in all spheres of public life - as leaders in government, businesses and the broader community. The advancement of gender equality should also be included in the standards against which the actions of power-holders are measured. Despite the widespread establishment of national women’s machineries, they are rarely resourced or politically supported and are therefore unable to influence government policy. Gender sensitive budgeting and policy making are useful ways to measure progress.

**Addressing the emerging issues**

Meeting these challenges must continue to be our priority until real progress is made. At the same time, new issues have emerged since the last review of the Beijing Platform for Action five years ago that also demand our focus.

The world financial system is experiencing an unprecedented period of economic uncertainty.

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The global economic crisis has serious implications for women. While there are already signs of early recovery, our experience with the 1997 East Asian crisis suggests that social recovery takes much longer. The ILO has estimated that 5.1 million women will become unemployed this year because of the economic downturn - in addition to the 32.6 million who are already without paid work.4

Some commentators have labeled the economic crisis a ‘Mancession’ because more men than women in some countries, have lost their jobs.5 But the truth is women are facing battles on multiple fronts. Women comprise the majority of vulnerable and informal sector workers in the region. As a result they often work without any social protection. A woman’s paid and unpaid workload increases when men lose their jobs. They often end up carrying the double burden of family breadwinner and care giver. Traditional gender roles do not necessarily reverse when a man stops working.

Climate change will magnify a number of existing challenges to women. It will increase the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters in our region. The Asia Pacific region accounts for 97 per cent of natural disaster fatalities worldwide.6 While climate change will undoubtedly affect everyone, women are among the most highly impacted due to gender-based division of labour and existing gender inequality. Women and children are 14 times more likely to be victims of natural disasters than men in societies where gender inequalities exist, thus further challenging MDG 3 targets.

Achieving gender equality

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We only have five years left before the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We cannot let the economic crisis or climate change reverse gains we have already achieved, particularly the freeing of more than 350 million people from extreme poverty between 1990 and 2004. Gender sensitive stimulus packages, access to credit, support for women's businesses, and an increased investment in agriculture to guarantee food, water and energy security are measures that will support long term economic growth as well as improve outcomes for women.

In conclusion Ladies and Gentlemen,

“We should be proud of the gains; however, we must realize that there is still much that remains to be done.”” I said those words at the 1995 conference and they remain true today. We must intensify efforts toward the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Many of the challenges I have touched on this morning will be discussed in more detail over the coming days. We are fortunate to have with us many leaders from Member States, the

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women's movement, as well as leading gender equality experts.

I want to recognize three truly remarkable women - Thanpuying Sumalee Chartikavanij, Founding Member of the Thai Women Watch, Patricia Licuanan, and Khunying Supatra Masdit - for their vision and courage to improve women’s lives and their commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women. I also want to acknowledge the many remarkable people from government, civil society and the women’s movement that are in this room today.

You have come here for this meeting because you know you can make a difference. You have come here because you want to make a difference. Together we can turn Asia Pacific into a region where women and girls can live free from poverty, free from violence and free from discrimination.

Let us keep on moving forward, never turning back.

I Thank You
Madam Under-Secretary General, excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank UN ESCAP and UNIFEM for giving me this opportunity to share with you some key lessons of working to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) over three decades. I draw upon the experience of Pakistan but look beyond this.

Let me start with what I believe is a key statement: the statement of the Secretary General in launching the UNiTE Campaign in March 2008:

There is one universal truth, he said, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: *violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable.*

This is an example of highest level commitment and as such a best practice. But in trying to eliminate GBV we face two major challenges:

1. Commitment – even at the top – is never enough by itself to change ground reality for women

2. Underlying the resistance to rendering violence unacceptable, intolerable and inexcusable lie ingrained deep-seated habits and attitudes of a still largely patriarchal world that find easy expression in ‘cultural difference’

In 2005, Radhika Coomaraswamy, as the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, noted in an interview that: “There’s a lot of the law writing, standard setting, and programmes being planned, but the biggest problem…is that people are using culture and religion to deny women’s rights.

The concern was reiterated in 2006-2007 by the next SR Yakin Erturk who expressed the need to move beyond a solely State-centric approach to address non-State actors at the local level using culture to justify and excuse acts of discrimination and violence against women, thus undermining the compliance of States with their international human rights obligations.’

The Indepth Study of the Sec Gen reiterates the issue of some states and groups within many communities claiming to defend cultural traditions (para 81). The UN General Assembly’s Resolution *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women* also stresses that it is important that States strongly condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations.
with respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.’

Personally and long before my present mandate, I have maintained that “regardless of where or when it occurs or the nature of its manifestation, violence against women is always legitimised by arguments of ‘culture’ because: (1) no society is devoid of culture, (2) the dominant culture throughout the world is patriarchal and, (3) patriarchal culture inevitably seems to validate violence as an acceptable, even desirable, attribute of masculinity [and] the dominant gender.”

It is inevitable that if violence is considered a legitimate response to dissent and difference, specific acts of violence against individuals who are socially devalued by the dominant culture (including but not only women) inevitably become even more acceptable. When acts of violence become the ‘norm,’ they remain unquestioned. Explicit and implicit cultural legitimatization for gender based violence against women is found in political discourses, formal state laws as well as in societal practices all over the world and not just in the Asia Pacific region.

With respect to culture, let us be clear that

- Culture is not a definitive entity frozen in time, but an ever-evolving process of contestation and change. Culture is not an earthenware pot handed over in legacy from one generation to the next. It is more like a cloth constantly being woven. ‘Culture’ is reproduced in the minutia of daily interaction defining norms of appropriateness.

- The good news is that all societies have more than just a dominant culture - multiple sub-cultures that contest the dominant culture weave in threads of new colour and texture and when sufficiently new threads become visible this refashions the dominant culture as well.

- As a friend says: “the greatest tradition of all is the reinvention of tradition” and if women rarely define the dominant culture, because they do not have the economic, social or political power to do so, they do have the power to introduce alter the reality through collective action.

Women of course are not a homogenous category and are differentiated by class and other factors determining personal power and powerlessness. Still just as all men enjoy - in some measure - the advantages of a patriarchal culture and structures of power, all women suffer – albeit to differing degrees - the impositions and constraints of that same culture and structure.

The centrality of power relations in the equation of GBV is not one of my making. The 1993 UN GEN ASSEMBLY Dec on the elimination of all forms of VAW says:

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2. Farida Shaheed, Due Diligence.
“violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men,”

Consequently, to eliminate GBV requires a reorientation of existing power relations between women and men, girls and boys. In order to overcome violence against women, the generally pervasive culture of violence must be replaced by a culture of peace (as in the UNESCO campaign4) that can eliminate the value attached to violence and provide social spaces in which differences are resolved without resort to violence.5

**Changing terminology**

- Culture is an emotive term with deep resonance amongst peoples everywhere that links to people’s sense of self.

- **On the other hand, culture must not be defined by practices which are intolerable, inexcusable and unacceptable which is what VAWG is.**

Hence, I would argue for a change of terminology. In working with remote traditionalist communities in Pakistan in the research project WEMC we found young men expressed a desire to stop the horrific incidents of VAWG but not lose their Baloch-ness. We ended up using a 2-pronged strategy:

1) Opening a debate on what defined local culture by promoting the voices of local persons who engaged with youth to discuss what was essential and what not, what was desirable and what not in their particular cultural reality.

2) We distinguished between culture as key markers of identity and sense of self and customs as practices that have become attached to that sense of self but are only ‘learned habits and attitudes’ that need to be changed. This new terminology was recently suggested by Ms. Virginia BONOAN-DANDAN, a member of the UN Committee on Soc Econ & Cultural Rights to replace ‘negative cultural practices.’

**I do not want to take up more time with the issue of culture, but would like to indicate that there is a WEMC Strategy Paper** on what measures can be taken to address use of ‘culture’ to legitimise GBV which is available outside.

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4. The United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) started a Culture of Peace Programme in the early 1980s. 2000 was declared the UN International Year for the Culture of Peace and the first decade of the new millennium the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) under UNESCO coordination.

The UNiTE Campaign objectives, outcomes

The five proposed outcomes of the UNiTE Campaign are appropriate but need further elaboration.

1. Adoption and enforcement of national laws
2. Multi-sectoral National Plans of Action
3. Data Collection and Analyses
4. Local and national campaigns to prevent and support
5. Systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations

A. Adoption and Enforcement of National Laws:

The challenge is how to transform policy commitment into practice and how to ensure laws are effectively implemented, e.g. in Pakistan the intention to address VAW has been articulated since 1995. But it was not until 2005 that legislation was enacted to address so-called honour crimes – or as a judge in Pakistan says ‘dishonorable crimes,’ until 2007 to amend the terribly discriminatory Hudood laws on dealing with various sexual crimes including rape and the conflation of rape with consensual sex. Only in 2009 has a Bill on Domestic Violence been passed by the assembly and another on sexual harassment at workplaces is under discussion.

1. a. Progress has been possible due to the enhanced presence of women in the legislative bodies, where a few members dedicated to bringing about gender equality are able to mobilize a critical mass
b. Lesson 1: It is critical that rules and regulations are enacted asap after a law;
c. Lesson 2: Legislative drafting is a skill that needs to be enhanced since our fear is that one clause of the domestic violence bill that provides punitive action against those registering a false case may nullify what is otherwise a good law
d. Lesson 3: There may be a need to focus on laws providing compensation and not merely punitive action.

2. Laws may be insufficient and support mechanisms are required. The learned habits of generations that impose self-censorship and silence, the lack of familiarity of existing legal provisions and procedures, and the lack of support prevent women from speaking out and seeking redress for harm. Support systems such as legal aid and social counseling and shelters are essential.

a. Lesson 1: Campaigns and efforts need to negotiate with appropriate levels. e.g. in Pakistan we worked to change the policy for government-run shelters in 1995-
i. achieved in 1996 – but had no impact because the provincial rather than federal
government were responsible for the shelters.

ii. In 2006 we changed tact to persuade provincial governments to change their policies. A CSO-government partnership with donor support was successful, but only in one province (Punjab).

iii. Now with devolution in Pakistan, even working with provinces is insufficient, we have to see how to translate policies into action at the district level.

b. **Lesson 2:** The policy itself is insufficient,

i. need to prepare standard operational procedures and

ii. train staff at all levels on the new policy, standards and orientation to human rights in general

3. **Parallel legal systems need to be eliminated.** These include the extra-legal systems referred to yesterday but equally the new proposals which seem to be attracting support of Alternative Dispute Resolution Forums. Instead of bringing about a change in thinking and attitudes and practices, such forums when run by any local people tend to replicate negative learned habits and attitudes with the additional concern that they now have state sanction. The answer to poorly resourced judicial systems is not to establish parallel systems that will replicate such ideas.

**Of concern is that in the campaign support mechanisms** seem to be limited to outcome 4 relating to local campaigns and restricts this to CSOs. Campaigns are not enough; practical measures need to be taken. Further, CSOs can never replicate the outreach of the government so that the States must commit to establishing support mechanisms for girls and women survivors of violence and those under threat.

**Such mechanisms e.g. legal, medical and emotional support must encourage public-private government partnerships & collaboration amongst different government departments. Encourage CSOs by providing land at reduced rates. Mid-way homes to allow women and girls to move from shelters to everyday life when home is not an option.**

**B. National Plans of Action**

1. The idea of elaborating National Plans of Action is a good one – but such plans must ensure the following:

   a. Any Plan of Action to eliminate VAWG is an integral part of and definitely in consonance with the general Plan of Action for women around Beijing Platform

   b. Both the VAWG specific and general women’s Plans of Action are integrated into the country development plans and are not seen as stand-alone projects. Stand alone projects tend to NOT get integrated into the system and die when the financial assistance ceases
c. Are sufficiently resourced

d. Build in public-private partnerships

GBV is a cross-cutting issue in the different chapters of the National Plans for implementing the Beijing Platform.

**C. Data Collection and Analyses**

Considerable progress has been made in breaking the silence around GBV, efforts are underway to identify the diverse manifestations of violence and the extent of violence in order to address it.

1. WHO surveys on Domestic Violence need to be applauded. These need to be carried out across the A-P but though surveys elicit information on physical, sexual, psychological/emotions and deprivation/neglect as well as self-directed, interpersonal and collective acts, **they are limited to intimate partnership** violence.

What is violence? Who defines it?

2. WHO notes that definitions are a tricky business because what acts are perceived to be abusive are likely to vary between countries and between socioeconomic and ethnic groups, and according to the overall level of violence in the group. So we are back to cultural understandings and learned habits and attitudes.

3. UN 1993 Declaration: the term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

4. With the exception of what constitutes physical violence on which some consensus has started to be built (and even that is contested when it comes to specific acts – e.g. FGM and female cutting are physical acts), the terms are differently understood by different actors/users. As noted by the WHO Survey report 2005: there is less agreement on sexual violence and even less so on how to define and measure psychological harm, or emotional abuse and suffering.

5. What for example amounts to coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty?

6. Because of the complexity of defining and measuring emotional abuse in a way that is relevant and meaningful across cultures, the questions regarding emotional violence and controlling behaviour in the WHO Study questionnaire should be considered as a starting-point, rather than a comprehensive measure of all forms of emotional abuse. (17)

7. WHO has helped to ensure that VAWG health planners and practitioners focuses on VAWG; it is time for the economists to do so too – more efforts need to be made to
quantify the economic as well as social costs of VAWG.

8. **We must not make the mistake of assuming that silence around GBV is acquiescence.** There is a need to identify and surface what keeps women and girls silent and to address this. Data must be collected from the ground to identify the immediate constraints in women’s lives. Women and girls need to identify the issues they think need to be tackled.

   a. Only when women have the ability to analyse the factors and actors that keep them locked into a disempowered state will they be able to act for their own interest and will the power relations start to be changed.

   b. **One size fits all does not work – issues of intersectionality need to be factored into campaigns and responses.**

   c. Grounded data must build up to national information for appropriate interventions.

9. Pakistan has started a gender crime cell and unit but it is unclear where gathered statistics end up and how they are used.

Finally, as stated by the previous SP VAW, it is essential that research moves from naming and counting to fostering a deeper understanding of the ways in which violence is structured and sustains current gender inequalities.

**D. Campaigns** – mentioned above the need for support mechanisms to allow women and girls options in life that takes them out of cycles of violence.

1. **Preventive measures** must address what appear as cultural barriers to the elimination of VAW. These learned habits and attitudes are deeply entrenched and are difficult but essential to tackle.

2. A difficult and sensitive reality is that research WEMC in Pakistan, and confirmed by research findings in Iran and Indonesia indicates that **underlying VAWG is often control over sexuality.** Without addressing this underlying issue it will be difficult to take effective steps.

3. **Working with men and youth is essential** – in this it is vital to tackle and re-orient notions of masculinity which are linked to exercising coercive force. Balochistan – culture and learned habits.

4. **Media** plays a role in reinforcing or altering notions of gender and it would be important to examine the role of **entertainment media** as well as news media. Find ways of promoting and linking up with UNESCO’s culture of peace initiative.
E. Conflict Situations

Pakistan experience shows that IDPs women displaced because of natural disasters face most of the same problems as women displaced due to conflict. Insecurity is heightened in situations of displacement especially in camps. Social normative behavior that insists on control over women intensifies; insecurity leads to anger and frustration on the part of male relatives frequently resulting in increased acts of violence. While rape as a tool of war is not a factor, sexual coercion and abuse for security or food does happen. With the Asia Pacific accounting for 97% of the fatalities in natural disasters (ESCAP), it is essential that efforts to eliminate VAW take into account and identify measures to protect all women IDPs.

Conclude with Outcomes of this meeting:

1. **Priority themes of the campaign** –
   a. Legislation complemented by rules and regulations, standard operational procedures, training of personnel beyond officers to entire staff responding to violence.
   b. Consider how issues of intersectionality impact women and girls. vulnerability to violence.
   c. Elicit women and girls. understanding of the obstacles they face and the solutions they favour.
   d. Surface the ways in which violence is structured and sustains current gender inequalities.

Not a theme but a necessity – just as governments must undertake a multi-sectoral approach and get the commitment of diverse ministries, so too must the UN and ensure the full involvement of UNIFEM, UNESCO and others in this campaign.

2. **Partnerships & engaging youth and men and boys is essential**: I have to express reservations however about the exclusive focus on faith-based organizations. 1) Who defines who is faith-based? Defining some as faith-based suggests that everyone is faithless 2) It is not faith but structures of gender inequality that need to be addressed and overcome, including but not exclusively within religion institutions and traditions 3) Exclusive focus leaves unaddressed the local gatekeepers who use ‘tradition’ rather than religion to exercise and maintain control over women and their communities. It can also promote the mistaken view that only re-interpretations of faith are the solution 4) Finally, today when people are using culture and religion to divide people it seems especially critical that efforts aim at promoting cross-cultural cross-faith efforts to understand and challenge the underlying causes of VAWG.

3. **Key messages**:
   a. VAW is not a women’s issues
   b. Learned habits and attitudes are not intrinsic to culture or identity. These can and
must be unlearned, new values taught

c. There is no honour in killing
d. Being violent is not what defines a boy or man. What is masculinity – Pakistan pre-Beijing TV campaign – accompanied by information on existing remedies
e. Women and girls are not commodities to be controlled; economic and social progress depends on valuing the humanity of each girl and woman as autonomous beings with the full set of rights of all humans

4. Communication tools and techniques:

a. Reach beyond the converted: Entertainment media

b. Short sharp messages on mass media – print, broadcast and web-based. Malika Dutt’s Bell Bajao India good example of a message simply communicated to break the silence around VAWG

Let me end by saying that in the final analysis we have to ensure that:

VAWG is intolerable, inexcusable and unacceptable under any circumstances and in any place.
Annex 14: Bangkok Declaration for Beijing +15

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes

16-18 November 2009, Bangkok

Outcome Document of the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at Fifteen Years, and Its Regional and Global Outcomes

BANGKOK DECLARATION FOR BEIJING +15

We, the Representatives of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, meeting in Bangkok from 16 to 18 November 2009 for the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes, organized as part of the Asia-Pacific regional preparatory process, adopt the following declaration:

Reaffirming the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,1 adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the outcome of the twenty-third session of the General Assembly,2 and deeply convinced that the Beijing Declaration is an important contribution to the advancement of women worldwide in the achievement of gender equality which must be translated into effective actions by all States, the United Nations system and other relevant organizations;

Affirming that gender equality and the promotion and protection of the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are essential to advance development, peace and security;

Acknowledging the call for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, as set forth in the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;3


Also recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,4 the International Convention on

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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.
3. See General Assembly resolution 55/2.
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant human rights instruments;

Noting the participation of civil society organizations in the preparations for the Asia-Pacific Review of Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;

Commending the Executive Secretary of ESCAP for re-establishing the Regional Coordination Mechanism’s Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, which has contributed to enhanced coordination and coherence among regional United Nations partners in the advancement of women and gender equality as a means to promote sustainable and inclusive development in the region;

Welcoming the proposed changes in the United Nations gender architecture to support progress on gender equality and women’s empowerment at the global level, and noting the need for the new global entity to cooperate closely with ESCAP at the regional level, including through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism;

Expressing concern that:

(a) While the region has established itself as an economic powerhouse and experienced rapid economic growth, inequalities have grown in many countries and women have disproportionate representation among the poor, and this has been exacerbated during the recent financial crisis;

(b) While women make strong economic contributions, they also comprise the majority of temporary, low paid, and low-skilled workers in the region, often working without any form of social protection, which increases their vulnerability to discrimination;

(c) Women continue to bear the major responsibility for unpaid work, particularly caregiving work, and this contributes to weaker labour market attachment for women, weaker access to social security benefits and less time for education/training, leisure and self-care and political activities;

(d) While gender parity has been achieved by some countries in girls and women’s education, there is still a substantial need for progress in large parts of the region;

(e) Improvements in girls and women’s education have not been systematically translated into greater economic opportunities for many women in the region, and women on average are paid considerably less than men and underemployed;

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5. See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.
6. See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.
7. See General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1965.
(f) Factors such as culturally ingrained son preference, sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, the disproportionate impact of malnutrition on girls, early marriage, child prostitution and the commercial sexual exploitation of children continue to undermine the rights of girls and limit their potential;

(g) While there has been some welcomed progress in increasing women’s representation in politics through, among other things, quotas or reserved seats for women in a number of countries, there continue to be low levels of women’s representation in politics, and few countries in the region have reached the 30% target representation level established by the Economic and Social Council;

(h) Some parts of the region have unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality, and there has been a lack of progress in the region on women’s reproductive health and rights;

(i) There has been an alarming rise in new HIV infections among women from spouses and intimate partners in the region, and that the regional coverage of antiretroviral drugs and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV treatment for both men and women remain below the global average;

(j) Despite strong progress by some countries in the region to combat trafficking in persons, particularly women and girls, trafficking continues to be prevalent in the region;

(k) Not all countries in the region are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(l) Discriminatory practices, violations of women’s and girl’s rights and impunity – especially with regard to violence – persist in countries of the region, and enactment and implementation of domestic laws to address discrimination and violence against women should remain a priority;

(m) While information and communication technologies (ICTs) have brought considerable benefits to women in the region, women still lack equal access, and these technologies have also aided the proliferation of pornography and sexualized, disparaging and violent imagery of women on the Internet, and are creating new forms of exploitation of women, including its use in facilitating and organizing the trafficking of women and children;

(n) While women are largely responsible for natural resource management in the household, they have been excluded from developing, planning and implementing environmental policies when women are, in fact, together with children and the elderly, among the most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change;

(o) While women living in countries in conflict or post-conflict situations have special needs and play an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, they are still underrepresented in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict situations;

1. We, the Representatives of the members and associate members of ESCAP, reaffirm our commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and
Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

2. In making this reaffirmation, we commit to the following concerted actions:

(a) To intensify efforts towards the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third session of the General Assembly and to overcome obstacles encountered in their implementation;

(b) To promote active mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation and evaluation of regional, national and local policies and programmes, including the development of gender analysis tools for the effective monitoring and assessment of gender gains and gaps;

(c) To strengthen the role of national machineries and other institutional mechanisms that work towards the advancement of women and gender equality, through, among other things, definite commitment of financial and other appropriate assistance, and ensuring adequate and appropriate staff and resources;

(d) To take effective action towards the creation of an enabling environment at the national level by ensuring the participation of women on an equal basis with men at all levels of decision-making necessary to ensure the full participation of women in all spheres of life;

(e) To undertake full and effective action for the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, recognizing that gender equality is a goal in its own right and is central to all other goals;

(f) To promote joint responsibility of men and boys with women and girls in the promotion of gender equality, including in areas such as domestic and caring work and responsibilities, and addressing stereotypical attitudes and behaviour;

(g) To implement economic policies that are designed and monitored with the full and equal participation of women within the overall framework of achieving sustainable development and ensure poverty eradication programmes, especially for women, in particular during periods of economic hardship;

(h) To strengthen or establish accountability mechanisms that promote gender responsiveness in national policymaking, planning and public expenditure management through financial allocations and public spending which effectively advance women’s economic, social, political and cultural rights;

(i) To intensify support for statistical capacity-building efforts on the generation of gender statistics and to provide timely, reliable and disaggregated data by sex, ethnicity, age and location and the development of methodologies for the collection and processing of these gender statistics; and to ensure that gender statistics inform policy and programme decisions and effectively monitor and assess gender gains and gaps;

(j) To contribute to collaborative approaches and strategies aimed at protecting and promoting the rights and welfare of women workers, in particular women in the informal sector, rural
women, and migrant workers;

(k) To address the persistent discrimination and serious human rights violations against female migrants;

(l) To strengthen the provision of and ensure equal access to adequate, affordable and accessible public and social services, including education and training at all levels, as well as to all types of permanent and sustainable social protection/social security systems for women throughout their life cycle, and supporting national efforts in this regard;

(m) To enhance women’s entrepreneurial potential by providing them with access to and control over resources, including knowledge and skills training, trade opportunities and technologies;

(n) To review and as appropriate, revise national policies, programmes and legislation to ensure high-quality, affordable and accessible health care and services for all women, taking into account the diverse needs of women, and to undertake key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, paying particular attention to achieving the specific benchmarks to reduce maternal mortality, to increase the proportion of births assisted by skilled attendants, to provide the widest achievable range of safe and effective family planning and contraceptive methods and to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS;

(o) To intensify efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls, provide protection to the survivors, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls, and engage men and boys, as well as community and faith-based organizations, in eliminating violence against women;

(p) To elaborate and ensure that capacities and resources are available to implement multisectoral national strategies to eliminate violence against women, including measures to combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls;

(q) To address and develop measures to combat ICT-related violence and exploitation of women;

(r) To include a gender perspective and harness the active participation of women in the development of ICTs;

(s) To ensure the protection of women and girls, in particular against sexual violence, during and after armed conflicts, in accordance with the obligation of States under international humanitarian law and international human rights law;

(t) To ensure the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution;

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(u) To mainstream a gender perspective in environmental, disaster management and climate change adaptation programmes;

(v) To ensure that women’s needs and knowledge of natural systems are used in the development, planning and implementation of environmental policies, including adaptation strategies;

(w) To strengthen agricultural policies and mechanisms to incorporate a gender perspective, and in cooperation with civil society, support farmers, particularly rural women, with education and training programmes, as well as to strengthen the dissemination of information to them that would enable them to access services and resources for improving productivity;

(x) To consider ratifying or acceding to, as a particular matter of priority, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, limit the extent of any reservations, and withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention or otherwise incompatible with the relevant treaty;

(y) To promote, protect and respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, through, among other things, the full implementation of obligations under all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(z) To continue efforts to repeal laws and eradicate policies and practices that discriminate against women and girls, and to adopt laws and promote practices that protect their rights and promote gender equality;

(aa) To increase partnerships with civil society and the private sector for the promotion of gender equality, and to support the role and contribution of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations and women’s organizations, in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;

(bb) To review regularly the further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and, in 2015, to bring together all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, to assess progress and challenges, specify targets and consider new initiatives as appropriate twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action;

(cc) To strengthen regional and subregional dialogue and cooperation among members and associate members of the Commission as well as other relevant stakeholders on policy options and issues crucial to the region and for conveying the regional voice of Asia Pacific in global processes;

3. Request the Executive Secretary of ESCAP making effective use of the existing resources and mobilizing additional voluntary resources as necessary to:

(a) Strengthen ESCAP’s role in supporting members and associate members in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the recommendations of the Asia-Pacific High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes at fifteen years;

(b) Mainstream gender dimensions into all subprogrammes under the ESCAP programme of work;

(c) Provide to members and associate members, upon request, with technical assistance to build national capacity to mainstream a gender perspective and a rights-based approach in all programmes, through, among other things, mechanisms and processes, such as gender budgeting, gender auditing, sex–disaggregated data and monitoring and performance indicators;

(d) Support members and associate members in ratification/acceding to and/or implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(e) Mobilize the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism to further develop mechanisms and plans to promote action to combat violence against women and trafficking in women and children, including a coordinated regional response and follow-up activities on the Secretary-General’s Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women;

(f) Strengthen ESCAP’s coordination role as the Chair of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in serving to achieve further synergies on the advancement of women and gender equality among United Nations entities in the region;

(g) Submit the present outcome document to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fourth session and to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for consideration at its sixty-sixth session.

18 November 2009
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes

16-18 November 2009, Bangkok

(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION IN THE ESCAP REGION

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

In the present document, the secretariat summarizes the progress made and challenges encountered by ESCAP member States in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. It draws from responses to a questionnaire sent to all ESCAP member States and highlights measures taken by countries to translate commitments into action in the 12 critical areas of concern since the last review five years ago. It also highlights key issues emphasized in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including new technologies, violence against women, trafficking and the realization of women’s full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Women and poverty</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Education and training of women</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Women and health</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Violence against women</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Women and armed conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

1. The Beijing Platform for Action\(^1\) built on commitments made at previous United Nations conferences on women, as well as the framework established by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,\(^2\) setting out a transformative agenda for achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. In the present report, the secretariat offers a snapshot of the key challenges and progress made within the last five years by ESCAP member States in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the action taken to address key issues emphasized in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly held in 2000, entitled “Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”,\(^3\) including new technologies, violence against women and human trafficking.\(^4\)

I. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

2. Significant progress has been made over the last five years by countries in the Asia-Pacific region in a number of areas, including violence against women—in particular the recognition of crimes of honour and human trafficking as serious problems and criminal offences. Many countries have introduced legislation against human trafficking and domestic violence. Though progress has also been made in the areas of women and poverty and women and the economy, it has not always been sustainable. The lack of progress on women’s reproductive health rights and reducing maternal mortality remains a matter of serious concern. Also, the involvement of women and incorporation of gender

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\(^1\) 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, annex II.
\(^2\) General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.
\(^3\) General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.
\(^4\) Unless otherwise indicated, the sources of country information are the responses to a questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly circulated to all ESCAP member States as preparation for the regional review and appraisals in the context of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in 2010.
concerns in issues, including the impact of climate change, requires more attention. The sections below outline the progress made and challenges faced in each of the critical areas of concern.

A. Women and poverty

3. Though the Asian and Pacific region has established itself as an economic powerhouse and the engine of global growth, inequalities have grown in many countries and women are overrepresented among the region’s poor. In many countries, women represent the majority of rural subsistence farmers, and a large number of women work in the informal sector with no job security or social protection. The economic crisis has had a negative impact on the availability of credit in general, including the microcredit on which many poor women depend due to limited access to banks and sources of formal credit.

4. On the positive side, many Governments in the region have increasingly identified gender as an important pillar in poverty alleviation strategies. There is also greater recognition that investing in women by building their capacity and increasing their access to employment opportunities is “smart economics”, as it contributes to the economic and social development of a country. For example, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Uzbekistan reported that they have incorporated gender as one of the key elements in their national poverty reduction or national development strategies. However, gender impact analysis of all poverty reduction measures and of budgets clearly requires more attention from Governments.

5. Several countries have strengthened or put in place programmes to support women entrepreneurs, including through training and access to credit. In Samoa, the South Pacific Business Development microfinance scheme targets women who are unemployed or not able to access credit from banks to support their income generating activities and small family businesses. The scheme was developed by the Government, in partnership with one of the local women’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and is run by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development working together with the Development Bank of Samoa.

6. In some other countries, Governments have put in place a range of programmes to alleviate poverty for women. The Government of China has taken measures to promote women’s employment and entrepreneurship under the Employment Promotion Act. Unemployed women have access to free consultations and information about job vacancies to improve their chances of being re-employed. In Bangladesh, the Vulnerable Group Development Programme targets very poor, mainly rural women who have no productive assets and are heads of households (see CEDAW/C/BDG/5, p. 43). The Republic of Korea has increased welfare support to stabilize the livelihoods of low-income groups and to reduce childcare costs as part of its stimulus package to tackle the economic crisis.5

B. Education and training of women

7. While many Governments in the region have made commitments to achieve gender parity in primary school enrolment and several countries have increased both the number of years of compulsory education as well as the budget earmarked for education, spending on education in the region continues to be low. Many countries still spend less than 3 per cent of their gross domestic product on education. Some countries are cutting expenditure on education even though research has shown that girls’ education contributes to economic growth. According to ESCAP estimates, a 1 per cent increase in female secondary school enrolment rates could generate a 0.23 per cent increase in the annual growth of the region. Completion rates and secondary school enrolments are still lagging in a number of countries and require more attention.

8. By 2005, the following countries and areas in the region had achieved the gender parity target at the tertiary level: Armenia; Azerbaijan; Brunei Darussalam; Hong Kong, China; Georgia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Malaysia; Mongolia; Palau; Philippines; Thailand; Russian Federation; and Tonga. Moreover, in Fiji, Mongolia and the Philippines, girls outnumber boys in secondary schools, and, in some countries, girls outnumber boys in tertiary education. For example, in Brunei Darussalam and Maldives, the ratios in tertiary education are 1.88 and 2.37, respectively.

9. In terms of incentives, Bangladesh and China, among others, provide stipends to encourage parents to keep girls in school, thereby also reducing child labour and early marriage. Other Governments have developed conditional cash transfer programmes to help poor families to keep their children in school. Direct cash transfers to families and scholarships are provided in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Such programmes in Cambodia have reduced the drop-out rate among the students in sixth and seventh grades by 20 to 30 per cent. In addition, Cambodia has a programme whereby girls are housed with local female teachers, providing girls with safe boarding and lodging. In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, some projects focus on ethnic minority children, especially girls, and provide pedagogical advisors and teachers from various ethnic groups. Recent research in Bangladesh shows that women’s access to employment, especially in the garment industry, has also encouraged many families to support the education of their daughters.

10. Many countries have established programmes to improve the quality of teaching and

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educational outcomes, including through increased sensitivity to the needs of girl students. Several countries organize training programmes for teachers with a gender-specific focus. An in-service training programme in Bangladesh offers a Certificate in Education course that includes a unit on gender issues and encourages teachers to develop more inclusive teaching approaches. Samoa has implemented measures such as pre-service and in-service training, the formulation of a National Teacher Development Framework and improved teaching materials. Turkey offers a range of non-formal education programmes to raise literacy rates and enable schoolleavers to continue their education.

11. In many countries in the region, vocational training and entrepreneurship development programmes focusing especially on women are offered. For example, in Afghanistan, the Vocational Training for Afghan Women Project helps widows to acquire necessary skills in order to enter the labour market and access better sources of income. The Government of China offers training for rural women, covering vocational skills, literacy, practical agro-technology techniques and new crop varieties, among other areas.

12. Some ESCAP member States have also conducted surveys in the education sector to understand how gender differences or the specific needs of males and females are being taken into account in the design of school buildings and equipment. A review of textbooks has been carried out by the Republic of Korea to identify and remove gender-stereotyped images and texts.

C. Women and health

13. Many Governments in the region have recognized the importance of improving women’s access to quality health care. In the Pacific, most countries have programmes or strategies aimed at reducing maternal mortality rates. The Government of Samoa has extensive programmes focused on women’s health and safe motherhood, including nursing and midwifery services, and Nauru has established a well-woman clinic, which takes a lifecycle approach to health. More attention is also being given in some countries to raising awareness about and screening for breast and cervical cancer. The Government of Tonga, among others, has increased its overall budget allocated for health.

14. A number of countries, mainly in South Asia, still have some of the world’s highest maternal mortality ratios, which is a matter of great concern as most of the deaths are preventable. This requires concerted action by Governments in the region to: (a) strengthen health-care systems; (b) ensure transportation of pregnant women to adequately equipped clinics; (c) ensure access to family planning services and safe abortion; and (d) address the socio-cultural risk factors often tied to discrimination against women.

15. Some Governments have recognized the need to involve men in promoting the reproductive health of women. In the Philippines, for example, the Department of Health introduced the National Policy and Strategic Framework on Male Involvement in

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Reproductive Health. Men’s Responsibilities in Gender and Development (MR GAD) and Gender and Development—Fathers Advocating Total Health, Responsibility and Gender Sensitivity (GAD FATHERS) are two initiatives that have been implemented in Davao City, Philippines, to highlight men’s important role in reproductive health. In the Pacific, the Tonga Family Health Association also has strategies for engaging men and boys in outreach and training programmes.

16. Several countries in the region have established programmes to address the feminization of the HIV epidemic. Of particular concern is the number of women who are infected by their husbands. Many countries have undertaken measures to ensure that HIV-infected women receive assistance and treatment and to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Some countries have also carried out awareness campaigns, especially among sex workers and drug addicts.

D. Violence against women

17. Almost all the Governments in the region recognize the importance of addressing violence against women, domestic violence in particular. Some Governments have established commissions for that purpose and many countries have introduced legislation on domestic violence within the past five years. Some have taken steps to measure the problem through surveys and more attention is being given to awareness-raising, prevention and the role of men and boys.

18. For example, in the Pacific, Kiribati and Solomon Islands carried out nationwide surveys in 2009 on violence against women and similar surveys are planned for other Pacific island countries. Samoa participates in the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme, under which the Domestic Violence Unit, which handles all domestic violence cases, was established. The Division for Women at the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development of Samoa coordinates, implements and supports programmes aimed at eliminating violence against women.


20. Several countries, including Nauru and Tonga, have also established shelters offering women services and protection from domestic violence. In countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Korea and Thailand, such centres or shelters also provide medical care, psychological counselling and legal advice.

21. In the Philippines, the number of cases classified as violence against women and their children increased from 218 in 2004 to 3,599 in 2008, but much of this reflects more cases being reported and appropriately classified by police after an information campaign on the law. Brunei Darussalam has experienced an increase of 223 per cent in cases reported between 2000 and 2007, but attributes much of the increase to an increased awareness
that domestic violence is an offence. Building on the Law on Fighting against Domestic Violence, adopted in 2004, Mongolia established a national centre against violence.

22. In recent years, many countries have adopted harassment, domestic violence or violence against women legislation. Criminal or penal codes have been revised in countries such as Azerbaijan, India (Protection of Women against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Bill), Japan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (including forced marriage and sexual violence). Mongolia recently modified its criminal code so that violence against women is considered a crime against children, family and social morals.

23. Also, many countries, including Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Uzbekistan, have introduced anti-human-trafficking legislation in the last five years. There is also more focus on legal protection and support for victims, in contrast to earlier approaches that tended to treat the victim as a criminal while rarely prosecuting traffickers.

E. Women and armed conflict

24. Whereas most combatants in armed conflicts are male, it is civilian women and children who are the majority of casualties, refugees and internally displaced. In war-torn areas and conflict zones the systematic targeting of women and girls with sexual violence as a tactic of war was recognized for the first time by the Security Council in its resolution 1820 of 19 June 2008.

25. In the Asian and Pacific region, of particular concern to women at present are restrictions on girls’ access to education and women’s access to employment in the name of religious law, especially in conflict-affected and post-conflict areas. Also top concerns are threats to the welfare of pregnant women and their reproductive health, including in camps, largely due to their limited access to medical services in conflict zones.

26. Women refugees often face danger while fleeing persecution in their home country. Within the confines of refugee camps, tensions and violence are heightened. In some cases, women even face abuse from camp authorities and aid workers, the very people meant to protect them.

27. Some countries, such as Turkey, organize gender sensitivity trainings for security personnel and provide military units with training material on gender equality and prevention of violence against women. Training in gender sensitivity in peacekeeping is also provided in the Philippines and Thailand, and Afghanistan has stressed the need for troops deployed there to receive such training.16 The first United Nations all-women peacekeeping unit was deployed in 2007, composed of trained policewomen from India. New Zealand encourages women to participate in peacekeeping missions, and women comprise up to 30 per cent of all of the country’s police peacekeeping deployments.

28. The Governments of many Pacific island countries have recognized the importance of consulting women in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, as well as understanding their needs and priorities. For example, in 2007, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre and femLINKPACIFIC, held a Regional Conference on Women, Peace and Human Security to identify threats to women’s human security, discuss policies and form partnerships for strengthening the involvement of women in peacebuilding in the Pacific. In 2008, the Pacific Islands Forum Regional Security Committee held a meeting to address the causes of conflict and its prevention, and recognized the importance of involving women in conflict prevention. Among other things, the Committee endorsed the Guiding Principles and Implementation Framework for Customary Land Management and Conflict Minimisation, which reflect this importance.17

F. Women and the economy

29. In the period 1998-2008, employment-to-population ratios for adult women decreased slightly from 70.0 to 69.3 in East Asia and from 59.9 to 58.7 in South-East Asia and the Pacific, but increased slightly in South Asia, from 36.7 to 37.6. In Indonesia, from 2001 to 2007, female participation in the work force was half that of male participation, whereas in Pakistan in 2007, despite an increase of over 80 per cent in female employment, the employment-to-population ratio for women (19.9 per cent) was four times lower than for men (79.1 per cent).18 In Central Asian countries, women’s labour force participation rates have dropped in the two decades since the break-up of the Soviet Union.19

30. In South Asia, more than 60 per cent of all female employment is in agriculture, and in South-East Asia women provide up to 90 per cent of the labour for rice cultivation.20 In East Asia as well as in South-East Asia and the Pacific, approximately 60 per cent of women workers are employed in industry and services (2007).21 Women comprise the majority of low-skilled, temporary, casual, seasonal and contract workers.

31. While the current economic crisis had an initial impact on male-dominated sectors such as finance, insurance and construction, among the hardest hit are many sectors dominated by women, including exports, manufacturing, tourism and services. Exports have suffered large declines throughout the region since late 2008. In Samoa and other Pacific island countries, many women are involved in the garment and handicraft industries, which are heavily dependent on tourists and overseas markets, all of which have been experiencing a decline. Although there is sufficient evidence of the impact of the crisis on women, there

19. ADB, UNDP and ESCAP, Pursuing Gender Equality through the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and Pacific (Manila, 2006).
is not much evidence that national stimulus packages are gender responsive and invest in women’s employment. However, some countries in the region, such as Azerbaijan and Indonesia, have established a gender budgeting system so that State financial resources favour both sexes and thereby promote economic equality between men and women.

32. Women make up a disproportionate number of vulnerable employees in the region. In South Asia, the proportion of people in vulnerable employment is 77.5 per cent—the highest in the world—and data for 2007 show that, in South Asia, 85.1 per cent of working women are in vulnerable employment as compared to 74.3 per cent of men. Increasing women’s labour force participation is important for development; however, it is crucial that jobs do not entail the exploitation of or discrimination against women, and that they do provide social protection. In the Russian Federation, efforts are being made to improve the enforcement of labour standards for women workers in order to eliminate incidents such as dismissals of pregnant women and women with young children.

33. Wide wage gaps exist in countries throughout the region and are exacerbated during times of economic crisis. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 2004, women’s wages were just over one third those of men. In the Russian Federation, the average earnings of women are 64 per cent of those of men. While the male-female pay gap in New Zealand has declined, this is not the case for Australia, where the gap has widened from 13 to 16 per cent. The Government of Australia has stated its commitment to reducing that gap, increasing women’s participation in the labour force and supporting families to balance workforce participation with household responsibilities.

34. In Samoa, the participation of women in the economy is supported through village-based skills-building programmes aimed at facilitating income-generating initiatives for unemployed women. The Government of Brunei Darussalam encourages and supports the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which now account for 92 per cent of private sector employment. More than half are owned by women. Women now comprise 59 per cent of professional, technical, managerial and administrative workers and face no restrictions on ownership of land and property.

35. Some Governments, including those of Thailand and Viet Nam, have adopted legislation aimed at ensuring good working conditions and economic benefits for women workers. The Government of Viet Nam has also issued a decree on the organization and operation of microfinance institutions that creates favourable conditions for poor women to gain access to microcredit for their businesses.

36. Retirement age is still lower for women than for men in many countries, despite the fact that, biologically, women are predisposed to longer life expectancy and often must depend heavily on pensions based on lower earnings.

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G. Women in power and decision-making

37. National and local politics have traditionally been dominated by men. A number of countries from the region have committed to increasing participation of women in decision-making processes in the public sector; however, women’s parliamentary representation remains very weak in the Pacific island States. No women candidates were successful in the 2008 single/lower house elections in Nauru, Palau or Tonga. The Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu have never had any women members of Parliament. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, women won only 2.8 per cent of the seats in Parliament in the 2008 election. Following the abolishment of quotas with the break-up of the Soviet Union, many countries in Central Asia have seen previously high rates of women’s representation drop. In response, quotas are being reintroduced.

38. Studies indicate that women elected locally are better equipped to respond to the priorities of local needs, yet there is a low level of women’s participation in local politics in many countries. For example, in Thailand women account for only 5.88 per cent of presidents of local councils and members of local administrative organizations, provincial councils and district councils.

39. Temporary special measures, such as quotas or reserved seats for women, have increasingly been adopted or are being proposed in a number of countries. However, it is recognized that increasing the representation of women through a quota system does not necessarily translate into expanded power for women. For example, in Afghanistan, as a result of the quota for women established under the Constitution, one third of the parliamentarians are women, yet they still remain excluded from many of the decision-making processes. It is essential that temporary special measures are instituted along with strategies to promote and strengthen the participation of women in politics.

40. Several countries have implemented such strategies. For example, in Japan, the Cabinet adopted in 2005 the Basic Plan for Gender Equality, establishing targets to promote the expansion of women’s participation in policy decision-making processes, that is, “to expand women’s participation in every field so that women will have at least 30 per cent of the leadership positions in all fields of society by 2020.” Targets were established to: (a) increase the percentage of women recruited through a competitive examination for national public employees to approximately 30 per cent by fiscal year 2010; (b) increase the percentage of female national advisory council members to 33.3 per cent by the end of fiscal year 2010; and (c) ensure that by 2020 neither male nor female membership of such bodies will fall below 40 per cent of total membership.

41. The Government of Indonesia addresses women’s concerns by including women’s groups in the Development Planning Deliberation processes at all levels and encourages women’s participation in decision-making processes.

25. In Tonga, no women were elected in 2008; however, one woman was appointed to the Cabinet. As Cabinet ministers also sit in Parliament, there is one woman out of a total of 32 members. The Government of Tonga reported the number of seats held by women in national Parliament as 1 in 2005, 2 in 2006 and 2007 and 1 in 2008 and 2009.


engagement in political processes in order to achieve 30 per cent women’s representation in the decision-making positions.

42. In 2006, the Government of Kyrgyzstan adopted a presidential decree on measures to improve gender policy. In 2008, the Government adopted the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in order to ensure a balanced representation of men and women at all levels of decision-making processes.

43. To promote women in power and women’s participation in parliament and public offices at all levels, the Government of Thailand developed the Thai Women’s Development Plan in the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan, covering 2007 to 2011.

44. In 2007, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Viet Nam organized training to increase the proportion of women in the National Assembly.28

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

45. Institutional machineries and mechanisms for the advancement of women in many countries in the region report the lack of financial and human resources as key barriers to being more effective. The status and importance accorded to such mechanisms are also subject to changes in political leadership, political parties and administrations within the Government.

46. More effective linkages between women’s national machineries and civil society, women’s organizations at the national and international levels, media and other stakeholders are also essential to articulate key priorities for women and to advocate for institutional change. Uzbekistan, for example, reported that the weak relationship between women’s committees and the mass media inhibited the effectiveness of the national machinery. Working and forming partnerships with men and youth has also been identified as an important strategy.

47. The Government of Viet Nam reported that the proportion of women leaders in public administration, judicial agencies and research and science institutions was still low and not in line with women’s contribution to socio-economic development.

48. In order to better address institutional barriers to the advancement of women, further research and sex-disaggregated data is needed. Countries such as Azerbaijan and Indonesia report resource constraints in the collection of sex-disaggregated data, especially in much-needed areas such as statistics on violence against women, women’s employment and women in decision-making, and subnational level statistics.

49. A relatively new development in Turkey is the Government proposal for the establishment of an equal-opportunity commission, which has been submitted to Turkish Grand National

Assembly. This proposal has been approved in relevant commissions and in the General Assembly. In Tonga, women’s affairs are now covered by a ministry.

I. Women and human rights

50. Many Governments recognize the importance of protecting the human rights of women and girls and acknowledge that women and girls experience gender-based discrimination in their public and private lives. All countries in the region have signed or ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with the exception of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nauru, Palau and Tonga. The countries in the region that have most recently become States Parties are Brunei Darussalam (2006), Cook Islands (2006), Kiribati (2004), Marshall Islands (2006) and the Federated States of Micronesia (2004). However, a number of countries have entered reservations against the Convention for reasons of religion, culture or conflict with domestic laws.

51. The following countries in the region have signed, ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention: Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Vanuatu. The Pacific has taken the lead in developing legislative compliance indicators to monitor the progress in implementing provisions of the Convention.

52. Discriminatory practices, flagrant violations of women’s rights, and impunity—especially with regard to violence—continue to be pervasive throughout the region, despite Government commitments to protect and promote women’s rights. More effective implementation of laws and legal literacy education is needed. However, while there has been progress in enacting gender equality laws and legislation, it has not necessarily translated into greater gender equality in many women’s lives due to entrenched power structures and socio-cultural, customary and traditional attitudes, practices and systems that subordinate women.

53. Several countries in the region are also identifying and revising laws that discriminate against women. In Thailand, a number of laws have been reviewed or adopted in recent years through a participatory process, in order to improve gender equality or benefit women. For example, an amendment to the Penal Code criminalizes marital rape, and the definition of “victim” has been expanded so that men can file rape charges against a woman or another man. Pregnant women who are sentenced to death now have their sentences commuted to life in prison. An amendment to the Commercial Code addressed restrictions on women’s grounds for divorce. In addition, domestic violence legislation was enacted in September 2007. In April 2009, the Enhancing lives of female inmates

29. As of 29 June 2009.
A project was launched; the initiative was spearheaded by Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol, a public prosecutor and campaigner for improvements to the lives of female prisoners.

54. The Government of Azerbaijan adopted a law guaranteeing gender equality, which defines gender-based discrimination, addresses multiple and compounded discrimination and covers a range of special measures. A National Plan of Action on Family and Women’s Issues (2008-2012) was recently introduced, and article 17 of the Law on Guarantees of Gender Equality bans sexual harassment. The Ministry of Justice has initiated trainings for judges, law enforcement officials and representatives of the legal profession in order to raise their awareness of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

55. The Government of Viet Nam adopted an amendment to the Law on Social Insurance so that it now includes regulations with respect to both men and women. The Law on HIV/AIDS gives special attention to the protection of women. The National Assembly adopted the Law on Gender Equality, which came into effect in July 2007. The main aim of the law is to strengthen the legal system to promote gender equality and women’s advancement and define key aspects of gender equality in all areas of social and family life, as well as gender equality measures and responsibilities of agencies.

J. Women and the media

56. Workshops and conferences have been held on women in media, and in a number of countries more women are joining media organizations and studying journalism and mass media communication. However, the stereotyped portrayal of women persists, and women are still more likely than men to be portrayed in stereotypical ways. For example, in advertising, television programmes, newspapers and magazines, women are more likely to be shown as housewives, as sex objects, serving men, and as victims of violence, harassment, sexual assault and murder. Typically, women are cast in roles bound by strict societal norms, or stereotyped as poor victims or glamorous celebrities. The Global Media Monitoring Project 2005 reports that (globally) “women are more than twice as likely as men to be portrayed as victims: 19 per cent of female news subjects, compared with 8 per cent of males, are portrayed in this way.”

57. Though there has been an increase since 1995, when 17 per cent of those heard and seen in the news were women, the situation in 2005 was described as abysmal. Reporting by journalists can sometimes carry a bias against women. For example, Thailand reported that women are sometimes blamed as the cause of the violence inflicted against them (see CEDAW/C/THA/4-5).

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58. Many Governments in Asia and the Pacific have recognized the importance of the media, including radio, television and newspapers, in promoting women’s interests and gender equality and discouraging practices that discriminate against or are harmful to women. The National Broadcasting Corporation of Kyrgyzstan initiated a number of programmes related to gender issues, such as “Women in Law Enforcement”, “The Parliamentary Activity of Women”, “Rural Women” and “The Situation of Women with Disabilities”. In November 2008, the Government approved a campaign promoting 16 days of activism against gender violence with the aim of raising awareness and informing the public about violence against women.

59. Entrenched patriarchal values, often internalized and unconscious, appear to be one of the factors at the root of sexism in the media industry. The Philippines reported that some media practitioners are unaware that sexist language can significantly affect readers’, viewers’ and listeners’ perceptions of women (see CEDAW/C/PHI/5-6). The problem is compounded by limited progress in improving the presence of women in mainstream media organizations. Women employed in the media continue to receive lower pay than men and marginal representation on boards and unions; they are also more likely to have narrower career opportunities than men.

60. Some countries in Asia have developed media codes of ethics. Examples are the Canons of Journalism in Malaysia, the Journalists’ Code of Professional Conduct in Singapore and the Press Ethics Code in the Republic of Korea. These codes can be further honed in order to ensure that the stereotyped images of women are avoided and considered ethically unacceptable within the media industry.\(^\text{32}\)

61. It has become necessary to recast the original conceptualization of women and the media in the Beijing Platform for Action to encompass issues relating to the rapid changes taking place as the world evolves towards an information and digital society. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are transforming the way the world operates in fundamentally powerful ways and are becoming a central force in shaping the crucial power structures within and among countries, and among institutional, private sector and civil actors and infrastructures. Thus, it is crucial that women’s concerns and needs are integrated in emerging ICT regulatory policies.

62. Of particular concern is the increased proliferation of pornography and sexualized, exploitative and violent imagery of women on the Internet, in particular the ease of access to such images for boys. This entails the risk that boys will come to perceive sexual exploitation and violence against women and children as acceptable, and that the incidence of such behaviour could increase. Various forms of new media technologies can be used to foster violence against women. For example, digital video disks have enabled greater interactivity between users and images; news groups facilitate the exchange of information on how to locate and exploit women; websites post large amounts of pornographic materials; numerous video games are based on violence against women themes; chat rooms facilitate

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the grooming of young women and men for sexual abuse; file transfer protocol is used for exchanging materials on child pornography; and some virtual communities promote the buying, selling, abuse, degradation and stalking of women. This is exacerbated by the loose regulation on the use of the Internet and new technologies for such harmful purposes.

63. Among other considerations, the Government of the Philippines is concerned that new media have been enabling human trafficking rings to operate more easily. The absence of a lead agency or mechanism responsible for policymaking and monitoring of gender concerns in ICTs has adversely affected the Government’s ability to address these issues in the new media (see CEDAW/C/PHI/5-6).

64. On the positive side, the potential of many ICTs has been tapped by women’s organizations. Traditional media, such as radio, continue to be major accessible sources of information for grass-roots and poor women in particular. In Fiji and other Pacific island countries, women’s groups make use of radio as an effective way of sharing information. However, in Tajikistan, women’s limited access to mass media was cited as one of the reasons for the lack of participation by rural women in sociopolitical life and in the voting process (see CEDAW/C/TJK/1-3).

K. Women and the environment

65. Many Governments in the region have recognized the importance of mainstreaming gender into environmental policy; in some countries women are involved in decision-making, especially in mid-level management positions in NGOs and Governmental environment agencies.\textsuperscript{33} Several countries have specifically examined the impact of development on the environment and its implication for women, and have initiated gender audits of programmes. An example is the National Plan of Action of Pakistan for implementing Beijing commitments, which includes a chapter on women and the environment.

66. Rapid economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region has been achieved at a huge environmental cost, which includes deforestation and the destruction of wetlands as well as increased carbon dioxide emissions and water and air pollution. Many countries face environmental stress and the potential negative impact of climate change. This will heighten the risk of food insecurity and loss of livelihoods, especially for the poor and rural women. For many who live in environmentally fragile and marginal areas, including the small island developing States, development is hindered by frequent natural disasters.

67. Globally, the region accounts for the highest number of natural disasters. Although women have been greatly affected by disasters, they are less likely to have ready access to information or to be included in the early warning systems information loop, due to constraints related to gender roles. For example, a disproportionate number of women perished relative to the number of men in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{34} Ansa Masaud, Cecilia Njenga and Lucia Kiwala, “Climate change is not gender neutral”, Urban World, vol. 1, No. 2, March 2009, p. 30.
68. In poor households, securing energy and water sources is generally the responsibility of women and children. They are also usually responsible for household cooking and spend large amounts of time near indoor stoves which burn charcoal, wood or biomass which produce smoke that causes a health hazard.

69. Gender is still often not mainstreamed in many environmental programmes. In many countries, there are no gender specialists in units within the ministries dealing with environmental matters, and men tend to dominate the ministries that are responsible for environmental affairs. However, some Governments have taken steps in this direction.

70. For example, the Government of Turkey has incorporated a section on environment and women in its Gender Equality National Action Plan (2008-2013) and has established an monitoring and assessment committee focused on environment and women.

71. The Government of Thailand has established a Chief Gender Equality Officer and put in place gender focal points within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. The Ministry will collect sex-disaggregated data to help analyse the effects of projects and programmes in order to guide national policies on equitable and sustainable development.

72. The Government of Samoa has adopted 13 international and 5 regional agreements involving women in the design of disaster management and disaster risk reduction strategies. This has provided an opportunity to involve women and address gender aspects of disasters and climate change.

73. The Government of the Philippines identified gender as a cross-cutting issue and incorporated a policy on gender equality in its environmental sector, including the management of forests and biodiversity, pollution, solid wastes and sustainable agriculture. The Government also implements projects that contribute to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity with attention to gender roles. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources submits reports on gender issues in the environment sector to the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women.

L. The girl child

74. It is widely acknowledged that investing in girls is one of the single most effective strategies for socio-economic progress. Investment channelled towards girls’ education and income-generation has multi-generational benefits which multiply at the broader societal level.
75. Despite this, the reality for girls in the region remains rather bleak. Culturally engrained son preference often results in girls having less access to education, food, and income generation opportunities as compared to boys and also being more likely to suffer from malnutrition, sex-selective abortion, and female infanticide. The Asia-Pacific region is home to three quarters of the world’s stunted, underweight children, with disproportionate impact on the girl child. Half of the world’s malnourished children are in South Asia alone. In many households, females eat last and least. High maternal mortality rates in South Asia are also due in part to anaemia and high levels of poor nutrition in many pregnant women.

76. In the region, girls in South Asia are most at risk of early marriage—more than 30 per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 are married. Early marriage increases girls’ risk of HIV infection and complications from pregnancy and childbirth, and usually hinders girls’ education and consequently their economic opportunities. The combination of a rapid rate of HIV infection, especially among girls and women, the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and young women and the lack of youth-friendly reproductive health information and services is also alarming.

77. Child sex tourism, child prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation have been well documented in South-East and South Asia for several years, but recently, research commissioned by ESCAP, the United Nations Children’s Fund and the NGO network End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT International) in Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu confirmed that it is also prevalent throughout the Pacific, where the demand is often fuelled by male-dominated logging, fishing and mining industries along with tourism.

78. Some progress has been made in recent years through the concerted efforts of Governments, the United Nations and NGOs, particularly on cross-border trafficking and child sex tourism in the Greater Mekong Subregion. In 2008, the Government of Singapore introduced a penal code that protects young persons against commercial sexual exploitation.

79. Some Governments offer incentives for families to send girls to school, which helps them to avoid early marriage and ensures girls’ right to education. Some educational systems include sexual health as part of the curriculum in order to make young people aware of issues such as sexual responsibilities and prevention of HIV infection. Increasingly, working with boys and men is considered a strategic intervention to promote gender equality from a young age, by changing beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

80. In terms of country-specific initiatives, a number of Governments have, in the past five years, incorporated measures to address issues surrounding the girl child. Some examples appear below.

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81. The Government of Cambodia developed a National Action Plan for 2008-2012 in order to eliminate child labour, including trafficking of children and women, child prostitution, child pornography and all other forms of child exploitation.

82. The Government of Thailand has taken consistent steps to revise and enact legislation to harmonize its national laws with the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,\textsuperscript{44} in order to protect and promote the rights of girls to equal treatment and opportunities. A forum was established where children, particularly girls’ voices, can be heard. Originally set up in four provinces in 2005, it expanded throughout the country in 2006.

83. The Government of Singapore has been working through the Association of Devoted and Active Family Men and the Centre for Fathering, while in Hong Kong, China the Education Bureau is embarking on an “equal opportunities for all subjects” initiative, rejecting the practice of streaming girl and boy students to different subjects, which reinforces gender stereotyping at an early age.

84. The Government of Australia has committed itself to ensuring that all children have access to early childhood education, and made amendments to its Family Law Act 1975, emphasizing the right of a child to know both parents and to be protected from any harm.

II. CONCLUSION

85. It is clear from the above that much progress has been made in the 12 critical areas of concern specified in the Beijing Platform for Action. However, much more needs to be done, and at a faster pace, to fulfil the commitments made in Beijing in 1995 and bring about transformative change. While new threats and challenges are emerging, persistent obstacles must still be overcome. This review provides an opportunity for Governments in the region to refocus their efforts jointly to accelerate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. The achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals depends to a great extent on the fulfilment of the commitments made in achieving gender equality, and the region cannot afford to fail.

\textsuperscript{44} United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, No. 27531.
Annex 16: Press Release

Date: 19 November 2009


High-Level Meeting on Gender Equality Closes with Adoption of Bangkok Declaration for Beijing +15

http://www.unescap.org/unis/press/2009/nov/HL_panel.jpg Bangkok (UN/ESCAP Information Services) -- Reaffirming their commitment to women’s empowerment, Ministers and senior officials from 40 countries closed a three day high-level meeting reviewing regional progress in gender equality with the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration for Beijing +15 which will intensify the region’s effort to improve the lives of women and girls.

“I have been pleased to witness a renewed commitment to seeking common solutions, building upon regional strengths and forging new partnerships to promote regional cooperation,” said Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of ESCAP. “Through our collective efforts the Asia Pacific region could be a place where women and girls live free from poverty, free from violence and free from discrimination.”

The Bangkok Declaration, which represents the outcome document for the Asia Pacific High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at Fifteen Years, is forward-looking and action oriented reflecting the issues and needs of the Asia-Pacific region.

http://www.unescap.org/unis/press/2009/nov/HL_panel-A.jpg “This outcome document provides us with a coherent regional position and strong voice to the world on how we would like to contribute to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment,” said Ms. Yoriko Meguro of the Japanese Delegation who served as Rapporteur of the High-Level Meeting and Chairperson of the Drafting Committee.

The Declaration will serve as Asia-Pacific’s regional input to the global review of the Beijing Platform for Action at the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2010 as well as a call for action in the region on critical issues for gender equality and women’s rights.

With its adoption, governments committed to concerted action in areas such as the establishment of accountability mechanisms that promote gender responsiveness in national policymaking, statistical capacity building, providing support to women farmers, poverty eradication programs for women, women’s entrepreneurship, and information and communication technologies. A stronger regional coordination role for ESCAP, such as for the Secretary-General’s Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, is contained in the Declaration.

The high-level meeting featured five panel discussions on the topics of accountability for gender
equality and women’s empowerment, women’s economic security and rights, closing gender
gaps in the Millennium Development Goals, implementation of the Convention on the
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the regional campaign to end
violence against women.

The meeting was highlighted by a reception launch of a UNIFEM photo exhibition “Women
CAN! Women’s Rights are Human Rights” commemorating the 30th anniversary of CEDAW.

“As we reflect on our progress – we must recognize our accountability to women. Let us seize
the opportunity of this moment and renew our obligations to eliminate systemic and historical
discrimination and violence against women … Let us all, governments, leaders of the region,
civil society, and activists commit to the full implementation of CEDAW in the region,” said
Dr. Heyzer during the opening ceremony of the CEDAW exhibition.

The meeting also featured side events on gender and HIV, best practices in domestic violence
legislation, and gender, energy and climate change organized by UN agencies and partners.

Annex 17: List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants sponsored by UNIFEM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Shagufta Alizai</td>
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<td>2. Nighat Said Khan</td>
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<td>3. Kausar S. Khan</td>
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<td>4. Khawar Mumtaz</td>
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<td>5. Sabiha Shaheen</td>
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<th>Participants sponsored by Shirkat Gah</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sara Ali</td>
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<td>2. Naureen Ilyas Butt</td>
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<td>3. Humaira Mumtaz Shaikh</td>
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### Annex 18: Agenda of the South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15, Delhi

#### South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15

Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future

*December 17-18, 2009, New Delhi*

#### Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:30 - 09:45</td>
<td>Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 11:00</td>
<td>Session 1: Inauguration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 11:30</td>
<td>High Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 - 11:45</td>
<td><strong>Session 2:</strong> Country presentations: Gains, Gaps &amp; Challenges Co-chairs: one rep each from Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan &amp; Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 - 12:00</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:15</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 - 12:30</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 - 12:45</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 - 12:45</td>
<td>Co-chairs: one rep each from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan &amp; India</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:45 - 13:00</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>13:00 - 13:15</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:15 - 13:30</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:30 - 14:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:30 - 14:45</td>
<td><strong>Session 3:</strong> Contemporary Challenges before the women's movement in South Asia Briefing on the theme and group work (4 groups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:45 - 15:30</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
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<td>Group 2</td>
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<td>Group 3</td>
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<td>Group 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 - 16:00</td>
<td>Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:00 - 17:20</td>
<td><strong>Plenary 1:</strong> co-chaired by one rep each from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal &amp; Sri Lanka Presentations, followed by discussion (max. 20 minutes for each group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17:20 - 17:30</td>
<td>Briefing for Day 2 and Close</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:00 - 09:30</td>
<td>Recap of Day 1&lt;br&gt;Identify Sub-group for drafting SA Statement&lt;br&gt;Briefing on Day 2</td>
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<td><strong>Session 4</strong>: Issues of common concern &amp; prioritization of issues&lt;br&gt;Briefing on the theme and group work (4 groups)</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:45 - 10:45</td>
<td>Group 1&lt;br&gt;Group 2&lt;br&gt;Group 3&lt;br&gt;Group 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 - 11:15</td>
<td>Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:15 - 12:15</td>
<td><strong>Plenary 2</strong>: co-chairs: one rep each from Bhutan, India, Maldives and Pakistan&lt;br&gt;Presentations, followed by discussion (max. 15 minutes each group):&lt;br&gt;Group 1&lt;br&gt;Group 2&lt;br&gt;Group 3&lt;br&gt;Group 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15 - 13:00</td>
<td><strong>Open Forum</strong>: on prioritization of issues&lt;br&gt;Co-chairs: Members of sub-group for drafting SA Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:00 - 14:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 - 15:00</td>
<td><strong>Session 5</strong>: Planning for participation in Global Forum and 54th Session of the CSW&lt;br&gt;Briefing on preparations (eg workshop, lobbying etc) and group work (4 groups)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Plenary 3</strong>: co-chairs: one rep each from Bangladesh, Nepal &amp; Maldives&lt;br&gt;Presentations by:&lt;br&gt;Group 1&lt;br&gt;Group 2&lt;br&gt;Group 3&lt;br&gt;Group 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00 - 15:30</td>
<td>Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30 - 16:15</td>
<td><strong>Session 6</strong>: Presentation of draft South Asia Statement for finalization and adoption by participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>16:30 - 17:30</td>
<td><strong>Session 7</strong>: Closing Session</td>
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South Asia Statement

Adopted at the South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15 Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises, Forging the Future

17-18 December 2009, New Delhi, India

We, the participants of the South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15, close to 100 women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, met in New Delhi on 17th and 18th of December 2009.

Having reiterated that democracy means the rule of people, in which women play an equal part, we reviewed the progress on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the governments of the region.

Having reflected on the concerns of the women of South Asia, we acknowledge some of the measures that have been taken since the Beijing Conference in 1995 such as:

- The ratification of CEDAW, the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the commitment to the MDGs;
- Increased political representation of women, with the exception of Sri Lanka, and legislative measures to address discrimination against women particularly the enactment of legislation on domestic violence in some countries;
- Nascent efforts to engender developmental programmes;
- Opportunities and the entry of women into diverse professions.

We also acknowledge the contribution of the women's movement and civil society organisations in their continued and relentless efforts to lobby and advocate for ensuring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

However, we note with concern:

- The roll back by states of their responsibilities to their citizens particularly in the core social sectors of livelihood, health, education and agriculture;
- The inability of governments to ensure security and justice;
- The partisan role played by international financial agencies and UN bodies, that negatively impact our development, economies and social structures;
- The interplay of fundamentalisms and assertion of identities;
- The inadequacy of measures taken to improve the status of women since the lives of women and girls in the region remain largely unchanged.
Women's lives are an integrated whole and all their concerns whether for poverty, education, health, violence, human rights are impacted by the interconnectedness of all these areas and their underlying causes enumerated above.

We express deep disappointment that our governments have failed to address the major underlying causes for the continued unequal status of women in our region. Lack of ownership of assets such as land/property, access to opportunities, access to and control over resources account for their disempowerment.

Therefore, we exhort the South Asian governments to address the contributory factors and take into account the following:

The internationalisation of conflicts, and the war industry

Globalised militarisation coupled with regional and global vested interests has made South Asia the theater for the play of both inter and intra-state problems resulting in resource based conflicts. An outcome of this has been the suspension of the normal rule of law, the legitimisation of violence and repression and a continuum of violence from the state and society to the family. Decreased personal security, increase in rape and sexual abuse, violence, harassment, torture, arrest, detention, disappearances have specifically impacted women. This has also resulted in displacement and trafficking of women in particular, and given rise to a culture of impunity.

Fundamentalism in the name of culture and tradition

Regressive cultural and customary practices have shrunk women's democratic spaces thus making it difficult for them to access the tools of progress. Such discriminatory practices, while underscoring patriarchy, are a threat to women's person and lives.

Climate change and its impact on sustainable development, food and nutritional security and livelihood

Geography, coupled with high levels of poverty and population density has rendered South Asia especially vulnerable to climate change. In the last two decades, 50% South Asians (more than 750 million people), have been affected by natural disasters. Women and families are the most likely sufferers of climate change coupled with a globalisation of the economy.

The dominant development paradigm of a market driven economy

Adopted by all our governments, this has resulted in the large scale economic displacement of women, disruption of the social fabric, and increased the burden of work and responsibilities of women as family sustainers. This has further exacerbated and adversely affected their nutritional and health status.

We therefore underline the need to confront these challenges and crises, and to forge a better future, and envision a South Asia that is truly democratic, just and peaceful where:

- There is an end to inter and intra state conflicts. Equality of citizenship is ensured so that identity, dignity and entity of women and men are respected equally.
Human rights are not violated in the name of culture, tradition or custom. Women's daily lives are improved and secure in the home and the workplace.

Food and nutritional security for all is ensured.

Forces of capitalism are controlled and sustainable development becomes the touchstone for all policies and programmes.

Women have equal and equitable access to the benefits of development, emancipatory education and upgraded health services.

Democratic spaces for women are expanded and they are ensured participation in decision-making in all institutions.

In consonance with the vision for South Asia, we, the participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka of the South Asia Consultation on Beijing +15 shall initiate a SAARC Women's Assembly which will be an effective platform for women of the region to interact, cooperate and network on issues of commonality.

Annex 20: List of Participants

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<th>Participants sponsored by UNIFEM</th>
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<td>1. Shabana Arif</td>
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<td>2. Mariam Bibi</td>
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<td>3. Ayra Inderyas</td>
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<td>4. Nighat Saeed Khan</td>
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<td>5. Khawar Mumtaz</td>
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<th>Participants sponsored by Shirkat Gah</th>
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<td>1. Sara Ali</td>
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<td>2. Naureen Ilyas Butt</td>
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<td>3. Arifa Nazle</td>
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<td>4. Sabiha Shaheen</td>
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Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate the Chairperson and the entire bureau on assuming their office for the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the Secretary General for his reports.

The Commission on the Status of Women is moving forward the Beijing torch. This year we are undertaking the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. As we gather here to share our experiences and learn from good practices with a view to overcome the remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), it is also a time for introspection and reaffirm our commitment to the areas identified in the Beijing Platform for Action to achieve a safer and brighter future forthe women of the World.

Chairperson,

In Pakistan, the inspiration for gender equality and empowerment of women comes from the vision of our founding father Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah who said "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you".

Pakistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights for all its citizens without any discrimination on the basis of cast, colour, sex, or race. It further ensures full participation of women in all spheres of national life.

Noting the role of women in our nation building Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto wrote in her book "Reconciliation Islam, Democracy, And the West" that "When the time came to pick up my father's mantle and legacy and lead the Pakistan People's Party, I, as his eldest child present in Pakistan, led the struggle for democracy. No one among my father's followers opposed this on the ground of gender. This was the gender equality in Islam under which I was brought up."

The democratically elected Government in Pakistan is moving forward the vision of Shaheed
Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto for women empowerment under a four pronged strategy, which includes:

- Reducing feminization of poverty;
- Promoting gender equality;
- Ending violence against women; and
- Introducing necessary legislative structure to empower women.

Chairperson,

I would take this opportunity to share with the Commission some of the steps that Pakistan has taken to realize gender equality and empowerment of women:

a) Pakistan's National Plan of Action to implement various commitments of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been prepared on the basis of observations made by the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on our last country report.

b) The National Commission on Status of Women was established in year 2000, to examine the relevance and efficacy of all laws, policies, programmes and measures for women empowerment and gender equality. The process to make the Commission fully autonomous is underway.

c) Women have gained increased role in every sphere of life in Pakistan. Women of Pakistan are now working in Civil Service, Foreign Service, Police and Military services.

d) Pakistan has the honour of electing Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto as the first woman Prime Minister of the Muslim world. Today, we proudly have the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly in South Asia, 17 women Senators (17% out of 100-member Upper House) and 76 women parliamentarians (22.5% out of 338 members of Lower House).

e) We have recently adopted laws to protect the rights of women, these include the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2009 and Protection against Harassment at Workplace Bill 2009. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act is under consideration. These legislative measures have been undertaken with the involvement of all stakeholders including the civil society organizations. Thanks to the vibrant women's movement in Pakistan for their support.

Among other initiatives taken for economic empowerment of women, the Benazir Income Support Programme is an innovative scheme, which provides cash grants to female head of a poor household. This improves the decision making role of the female head of the family and allows her to spend that cash grant on a priority laid down by her. Another initiative is a Programme for the grant of State Land to poor women tenant farmers in the rural areas.

Acknowledging that adult functional literacy for women particularly in rural areas contribute substantially to empowerment of women, the National Commission for Human
Development (NCH) has helped gained functional literacy to over 2 million women in rural areas. Pakistan's Gender Parity Index for adult literacy has increased in the last six years.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Medium Term Budgetary Framework have incorporated various gender-sensitive amendments.

The Ministry of Women Development's "Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP)" is aimed at undertaking a coherent gender reform agenda through phased implementation processes, including political participation, institutional restructuring, women employment in the public sector, and gender responsive policy and budgeting.

Chairperson,

While we review the progress made in the last fifteen-years, there are contemporary and emerging challenges. We are only starting to know the negative fall out of the multiple crises of food, fuel and finance. The Beijing Platform provides us a comprehensive document to incorporate our responses to the emerging challenges and look for new development paradigms.

Pakistan fully supports the new Gender Entity at the United Nations and believes that the Gender Entity will help to achieve gender equality and empowerment in a more co-ordinated and coherent fashion.

Chairperson,

Let us remember the words of, Goethe: “Freedom has to be re-made and re-earned in every generation.” Fifteen years ago Pakistan was represented in Beijing by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, let me pay tribute to this brave icon of women’s empowerment and quote from her statement “We must do much more than decry the past. We must change the future”. We must all work together to change the future and earn our freedom.

Chairperson,

Women continue to bear the burden of wars and threats to security which hampers their development. They need the support of the international organizations to give a voice to their concerns about peace and security. Chairperson, unless women are given a fair representation in the peace process, the world peace will be an elusive dream. To give peace a chance, give women a chance.

I thank you.
Annex 22: Declaration on the Occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women

We, the representatives of Governments gathered at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, in the context of the review of the outcomes of the Conference and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, and its contribution to the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council on the theme “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women”, to be held in July 2010, and the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly which will focus on accelerating progress towards the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, to be held from 20 to 22 September 2010,

1. Reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the declaration of the Commission on the Status of Women on the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women;

2. Welcome the progress made thus far towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, stress that challenges and obstacles remain in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and, in this regard, pledge to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation;

3. Emphasize that the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and stress the need to ensure the integration of a gender perspective in the Highlevel Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on accelerating progress towards the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015;

4. Recognize that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fulfilment of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women;

5. Call upon the United Nations system, international and regional organizations and all sectors of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, as well as all women and men, to fully commit themselves and to intensify their contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.
Asia Pacific Caucus Statement

54th CSW Session, 2010

Madam Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, sisters from the women’s movement and friends:

We are privileged to make the statement on behalf of Asia Pacific Caucus.

As we Commemorate the 15th Anniversary of BPfA, we are nostalgic, nostalgic about the energy, excitement, and engagement of women across the world who landed in Beijing where the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted in 1995 that raised our hopes — hopes of a world free of poverty and hunger, free of violence and a world in which women live with dignity and have an equal say in all matters of governance.

We welcome since then, the adoption of the Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 that have paved the way for supporting women’s significant roles in all aspects of peace-making and conflict resolution; the Secretary General's Campaign on Unite to End Violence Against Women; and the September 2009 Resolution of the General Assembly that delivered to the women the commitment of the UN member states the establishment of an new and ambitiously funded gender architecture.

Despite these advances, women and girls, especially in the Asia Pacific region face enormous and complex challenges as the dominant development paradigm continues to be guided by market ideology impacting on women in terms of climatic changes and disasters, food insecurity, unemployment and livelihood.

Democracies are in distress in many countries of the region, especially systematic persecution of legitimate dissenters and human rights defenders, and their families exists. Prolonged political crises, religious extremisms, fundamentalisms and military dictatorships in some countries continue to create critical situations and insecurity for women and girls through violations of their human rights.

Women and girls constitute some 80% of the world's refugees and displaced persons, including internally displaced persons — their needs remain unaddressed.

Violence against women and girls across all geographic and demographic areas is a major concern. We acknowledge the campaign launched by the Secretary General on Unite for Violence Against Women, yet the fact is - there are increasing reports of FGM, alleged violent sorcery killings, witch hunting, honor killings and acid throwing cases and rape as an instrument of war or colonization. New and pervasive forms of violence are emerging alongside new media and technology with cyber bullying.

Threats to women's human rights take place amidst tremendous uncertainties and multiple
crises in the financial, food, ecological, consumption, health reproductive spheres that have led to widespread economic displacements and migration. Economic and climate crises have increased feminization of poverty, loss of livelihoods, homelessness, social isolation and increased violence against women. Girls and young women have been forced to leave school to enter the labour force, entertainment industry and the sex trade. The root causes of human trafficking in its various forms are not being addressed.

In the midst of these challenges, fifteen years after, we urge the governments to fulfill their commitments and implement the BPfA and the Outcomes Document in its holistic spirit, promote and protect women's human rights, human rights defenders, abolish discriminatory laws and customary practices, particularly personal laws.

We urge governments to bring an end to impunity to the perpetrators of women's human rights violations and punishing those responsible for war crimes and gender based violence. We further urge the UN bodies to fully implement UN Resolutions 1325, 1880, 1888 and 1989.

Military spending must be reduced drastically and resources redirected to human needs. WE urge the States to halt arms manufacturing and curb their proliferation.

We urge States, intergovernmental bodies, corporations, IFIs and development agencies to follow the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in the Asia Pacific region and prevent economic displacement, environmental devastation, loss of indigenous knowledge and integrity, subversion of their rights and violence against indigenous women and girls.

We call upon the governments to pay heed to climate change warnings and put an immediate stop to all ecologically destructive and extractive activities by large foreign corporations; that specific needs of women and girls are integrated into disaster prevention, response and relief operations.

We urge the States to strengthen national institutional mechanisms; ensure provision of appropriate resources that are crucial to advance the position of women and girls; promote equal participation of women in leadership and decision making bodies at all levels.

The new gender entity in the United Nations must have effective field level presence and clear mechanisms and processes for engagement of women's organizations from the global to the national level.

We further urge that in this era of globalization, it is time we put gender economics at the forefront and that on all fora/bodies, be these global or regional, women's concerns should be central and women should have a space in these by their own right.

Last, but not least to realize that the intent and spirit of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Outcomes Document, the MDGs, CEDAW and other international instruments, we call upon the governments to move from rhetoric to action for women's progress is progress for everyone.

Thank you Madam Chair.
### Agenda

**30th April - 1st May 2010**

#### Day 1 – 30th April 2010

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>09:30 - 10:00</td>
<td><strong>Welcome, Introduction and Overview:</strong> Nighat Said Khan and Khawar Mumtaz</td>
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<td>10:00 - 11:30</td>
<td><strong>Living the Process: Panel Discussion on the Asia and Pacific Review Process.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Shahnaz Wazir Ali, MNA; Special Assistant to the Prime Minister</td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Shagufta Alizai (Shirkat Gah)</td>
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<td>Presentations by Abida Swati (Sungi); Naureen Tawakkal (Shirkat Gah); and Sabiha Shaheen (Bargad)</td>
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<td>Open Discussion</td>
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<td>11:30 - 12:00</td>
<td>Tea Break</td>
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<td>12:00 - 13:30</td>
<td><strong>Women and the Global Crises:</strong> Food Security; Climate Change; Resource Depletion and Livelihood; International and National Implications.</td>
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<td><strong>Chair and Moderator:</strong> Khawar Mumtaz (Shirkat Gah)</td>
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<td>Presentations by Sameena Nazir (PODA); Aqeela Naz (AMP); and Bushra Khaliq (WWHL)</td>
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<td>13:30 - 14:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>14:30 - 16:00</td>
<td><strong>Women, Peace and Security:</strong> The Interplay of International and National Processes and Plans</td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Raheela Durrani, Minister of Law and Public Prosecution, Government of Baluchistan</td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Nighat Said Khan (ASR Resource Centre and IWSL)</td>
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<td>Presentations by, Benazeer (Baluchistan), Saba (South Punjab), Rehana (Sindh), Mahwish (FATA), Maria (Gilgit-Baltistan), Sameera (Kashmir)</td>
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<td>16:00 - 17:30</td>
<td><strong>International and National Processes and Plans (Specific Focus on the New UN Architecture for Women: GEAR) the Pakistan National Plan of Action; Institutional Mechanism.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Mehnaz Rafi (Former MNA)</td>
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<td><strong>Moderator:</strong> Hina Jilani (UN Rapporteur; UN Committee Member for GEAR; Member UN Expert Committee on Women, Peace and Security)</td>
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<td>Presentations by Farida Shaheed (UN Expert on Culture); Saeddsabih Bukhari (UNIFEM representative); Shabana Arif (Rozan)</td>
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<td>17:30</td>
<td>Tea</td>
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<td>Round Table Discussion on International and National Processes Implications for the Pakistani Women’s Movement</td>
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<td>10:00 - 11:15</td>
<td><strong>Bridging the Streams</strong>: Towards a Comprehensive and Integrated Approach</td>
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<td>The National Plan of Action; CEDAW National Report; CEDAW Plan of Action; Beijing + 15 Review;</td>
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<td>National Plan of Action on Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888-89; National Mechanisms</td>
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<td>for Women’s Empowerment: Donor Driven and/or Political Will.</td>
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<td>11:15 - 11:45</td>
<td>Tea</td>
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<td>11:45 - 13:30</td>
<td><strong>A Review/Reflection of the Women’s Movement</strong></td>
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<td>Autonomy Versus Integration; Impact of International Processes and Constraints; Sources, Resources</td>
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<td>and Impact of Funding Directions; Challenges to the Women’s Movement (within the context of</td>
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<td>internal and regional constraints and imperatives)</td>
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Annex 25: Press Release

NATIONAL MEETING/DISCUSSION ON BEIJING +15
MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER


Around 200 participants attended from urban and rural organizations all over Pakistan including Gilgit Baltistan and AJK. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, MNA and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Social Sector, Raheela Durrani, Minister of Law and Public Prosecution, Baluchistan, Yasmin Rehman, Advisor to the Ministry of Women Development, Mehnaz Rafi, former MNA, Hina Jilani, Khawar Mumtaz, Nighat Khan, Shagufta Alizai and other leading women addressed sessions.

This consultation reviewed progress on commitments made in connection with the Beijing Platform of Action 1995, Pakistan National Plan of Action for Women’s Development, Millennium Development Goals and CEDAW. Progress made on Pakistan’s commitments was assessed in view of the new local and global changes such as economic crisis, climate change, conflict and its impact on the lives of women.

The forum concluded with specific demands of the government of Pakistan for improvement in the status of women. These included the demand to strengthen Ministry of Women’s Development with appointment of a full time minister; making National Commission on Status of Women fully autonomous with provincial and district level offices; developing one consolidated National Plan of Action addressing all women’s concerns; giving representation to women peasants and workers in parliamentary bodies and restoring local government system with an early announcement of elections.

Importance of the media’s role in creating awareness on women’s issues was highlighted with a demand for a responsible and responsive media. Reported endorsement of parallel judicial mechanisms (Jirga) by the Chief Justice of Pakistan was universally condemned.

The group expressed dismay over curtailment of the freedom of expression under current democratic government and rejected the absolutely unjustified ban on Ajoka Theatre performance (Burqvaganza) imposed by PNCA.

Shahnaz Wazir Ali and Yasmin Rehman appreciated the civil society organizations role in women’s development and assured the current governments and the Prime Minister’s confirmed commitment to support such progressive efforts. The meeting resolved to continue its commitment to struggle for women’s rights as equal citizens and to strengthen linkages with other social movements and allies for achievements of its objectives.