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Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting

Geneva, 6–7 November 2014

Report of the Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting

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I. Introduction

1. Resolution 2013/18 of the Economic and Social Council encouraged the United Nations Regional Commissions to undertake a regional review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the Twenty-Third special session of the General Assembly to assess progress made toward gender equality and the empowerment of women.
2. The Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) at its meeting on 28 October 2013 decided to hold the Regional Review Meeting on 6 and 7 November 2014 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. The meeting was organized jointly by ECE and UN Women in cooperation with the regional and head offices of United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Food and Agricultural Organization, International Labour Organization, and World Health Organization.
3. The intergovernmental review meeting was preceded by the Beijing+20 Geneva NGO Forum from 3 to 5 November 2014.
4. The key objectives of the Beijing+20 Regional Review meeting were to review progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the ECE region, identify current challenges, highlight good practices and provide directions for further action in the region.

II. Attendance

5. The meeting was attended by representatives from 48 ECE member States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.
6. Representatives of the Holy See participated under Article 8 of the Commission's terms of reference.
7. Representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental organizations were in attendance.
8. The meeting was attended by 456 participants, including representatives from over 120 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
9. The list of participants, as well as meeting documents, panellists' interventions, and statements by member States, are available on the ECE website at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35329#/>

III. Opening of the meeting (agenda item 1)

10. The meeting was opened by ECE Executive Secretary, Mr. Christian Friis Bach, Executive Director of UN Women Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark. Following these opening addresses, Ms. Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, President of the NGO Committee on the States of Women, Geneva, presented the civil society recommendations from the Beijing+20 Geneva NGO Forum.

IV. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (agenda item 2)

11. The meeting adopted its agenda and organization of work (ECE/AC.28/2014/1).

V. Election of chairpersons and rapporteur (agenda item 3)

12. The following officers were elected:

Chairpersons: Ms. Hijran Huseynova, Chair of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Azerbaijan, Ms. Carlien Scheele, Director, Gender Equality and LGBT Equality Department, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Netherlands.

Rapporteur: Mr. Thomas Fitschen, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations in Geneva.

13. The election of officers was followed by opening remarks by the chairpersons.

VI. Thematic dialogues

14. The five thematic panels focused on the following key issues: long-term trends in gender equality and the empowerment of women in the ECE region, closing gender gaps through economic and social policies, women's representation in policymaking and decision-making, ending violence against women and girls, governance and gender justice, and gender equality for sustainable development.

15. Each panel was chaired by one of the co-chairpersons of the meeting, led by a moderator and introduced by four to six panellists consisting of representatives from governments, specialized agencies, international organizations, NGOs, academia and the private sector. The interventions of the panellists were followed by an interactive debate for each panel.

A. Long-term trends in gender equality and the empowerment of women in the ECE region (agenda item 4)

(i) Moderator: Ms. Sarah Cook, Director, United Nations Research Institute on Social Development.

(ii) Panellists: Ms. Valentina Leskaj, Member of Parliament, Albania, Ms. Monika Linn, Principal Adviser to the ECE Executive Secretary, Ms. Salla Saastamoinen, Director for Equality, DG Justice, European Commission, Ms. Mahfirat Khidirzoda, Head of Committee on Women and Family Affairs, Tajikistan, Ms. Hallie Schneir, Deputy Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls, United States of America, and Ms. Daniela Terzi-Barbarosie, NGO National Women's Studies and Information Center, Republic of Moldova.

B. Closing gender gaps through economic and social policies (agenda item 5)

(i) Moderator: Ms. Shauna Olney, Chief of Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch of the Conditions of Work and Equality Department, International Labour Organization.

(ii) Panellists: Ms. Sylvie Durrer, Director of the Federal Office for Gender Equality, Switzerland, Ms. Virginija Langbakk, Director, European Institute for Gender Equality, Ms. Zhyldyz Polotova, Deputy Minister of Social Development, Kyrgyzstan, Ms. Lilia Pascal, Head of the Department of Policies on Gender Equality, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Republic of Moldova, Ms. Valentina Disoska, President, Association of Business Women, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Mr. Gocha Aleksandria, Vice-President, Georgian Trade Unions Confederation.

C. Women's representation and leadership in policy- and decision-making (agenda item 6)

(i) Moderator: Ms. Ingibjorg Gisladottir, Regional Director for Economic Commission for Africa region, UN Women.

(ii) Panellists: Ms. Patrizianna Sparacino-Thiellay, Ambassador-at-large for Human Rights, France, Ms. Sabine de Bethune, Member of the Senate, Belgium, Ms. Anne Sipiläinen, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, Ms. Aysun Sayin, Director, Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability, Boyner Holding, Turkey, Mr. Daniel de Torres, Deputy Head of Operations, Gender and Security Programme, Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, and Mr. Petru Macovey, Chairperson of Association of Independent Press, Republic of Moldova.

D. Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls (agenda item 7)

(i) Moderator: Ms. Monica Ferro, Member of Parliament, Portugal.

(ii) Panellists: Ms. Carolina Lasen Diaz, Head of the Gender Equality Unit at the Equality Division of the Council of Europe, Mr. Aleh Karazei, Head of the Directorate on Crime Prevention, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Belarus, Ms. Vered Swid, Director of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women at the Prime Minister's Office, Israel, Ms. Guguli Magradze, Gender Equality Commission, Member of Parliament, Georgia, and Ms. Maja Raicevic, Executive Director of the Women's Rights Center, Montenegro.

E. Anti-discriminatory legislation, gender justice and governance (agenda item 8)

(i) Moderator: Mr. Daniel Sansfaçon, Director General, Policy & External Relations, Status of Women Canada.

(ii) Panellists: Ms. Violeta Neubauer, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Slovenia, Ms. Olga Zhmurko, Programme Director, International Renaissance Foundation, Ukraine, Ms. Bardhylka Kospiri, Vice Minister of Social Welfare and Youth, Albania, and Ms. Kurbongul Kosimova, Director NGO "Najoti kudakon", Project Manager of the Women Resource Centre, Tajikistan.

F. The way forward: gender equality for inclusive and sustainable societies (agenda item 9)

(i) Moderator: Mr. Christian Friis Bach, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Europe.

(ii) Panellists: Ms. Liudmila Denisova, Minister of Social Policy, Ukraine, Ms. Helene Reardon Bond, Head of Policy, Deputy Director, Government Equalities Office, United Kingdom, Ms. Laurette Ponce, Applied Physicist in the LHC Operations team, Beams Department, European Organization for Nuclear Research, Ms. Sibylle Rupprecht, Executive Director, Catalyst Europe, Switzerland, and Ms. Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future, Netherlands.

VII. Co-chairs' summary and closure of the meeting (agenda item 10)

16. The co-chairpersons presented their conclusions. The participants in the meeting agreed that the draft co-chairpersons' conclusions would be uploaded on the ECE website for comments from meeting participants. It was agreed that the final report, including as annexes the co-chairpersons' conclusions and the civil society recommendations from the Beijing+20 NGO Forum, would be submitted to the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, as a regional input to the Beijing+20 global review.

Annex I

Co-chairpersons' conclusions

1. On the eve of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, ECE member States and stakeholders at the Beijing+20 Regional Review Meeting renewed their commitment to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women through the full and accelerated implementation of all critical areas of concern of the Beijing documents.
2. Participants stressed the need for urgent action to promote and protect women's and girls' human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstream gender perspectives into all policies and programmes, ensure the full and equal participation in decision-making and the economic empowerment of women, and enhance partnership and international cooperation.

Long-term trends in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the ECE region

3. The Regional Synthesis Report, which was prepared on the basis of 46 national reports submitted by the governments of ECE member States¹, identified progress in all areas throughout our region since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. Participants in the meeting concurred that advances have been widespread, although unequal and many challenges remain.
4. Particular progress has been observed in developing legislation regarding gender equality and women's rights and setting up national gender mechanisms. There have been strong advances in the criminalization of gender-based violence and public acceptance of violence against women and girls has declined.
5. Access to education has improved and in some countries women outnumber men in higher education. Progress has also been observed regarding a number of health indicators.
6. In addition, governments have increased collaboration with civil society organizations on gender issues. Women's organizations have made an important contribution to positive change and increased awareness of gender inequalities and their implications.
7. However, despite the observed progress, multiple challenges remain. The Synthesis Report and the interventions of many participants pointed to the existence of a wide gap between legislation and its implementation in all areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. In parts of the region, rising conservatism and a pushback on gender equality and women's rights and empowerment have slowed and sometimes even reversed progress.
8. In particular, violence against women remains prevalent, despite the introduction of legal provisions. New issues, such as cyberstalking, have emerged. In some areas, the situation of older women, migrant and refugee women poses particular challenges to governments and societies, and their specific needs have to be addressed. Discriminatory stereotypes remain widespread, and affect women's education and participation in the economy and in public life. Despite improvements, which have been supported in some cases by the introduction of quotas or other temporary measures, the participation of

¹ Another 7 national reports were received after the preparation of the Regional Synthesis Report.

women in political and corporate decision-making remains low. However, there are significant differences in countries across the region.

9. Progress and setbacks are often difficult to identify because insufficient sex-disaggregated statistics are being collected or there is a lack of common definitions, methodologies or analysis to make possible comparisons.

10. Women from marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, women living with HIV, women refugees and migrants are experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities.

11. Funding continues to be a particular problem, as too often action plans, new institutions and other initiatives are not supported by appropriate resources. There is lack of an institutionalized approach to capacity development of governmental and public institutions.

12. While the participation of women in the labour market has increased, it remains too low. Even where women can be considered employed, they are disproportionately found in precarious employment, part-time employment, lower paid jobs or are suffering wage discrimination. Quality and affordable child care and social services are undersupplied and underfunded in many countries. Unequal sharing of household work and unpaid care work for children, the sick and the elderly prevail, thus creating obstacles for women to find appropriate employment and realize their economic potential. Discriminatory stereotypes influence the educational choices of women and restrict their future employment opportunities in science and technical areas. All these factors lead to a persistent gender pay gap and sharply lower pension payments for women as compared to men.

13. The economic and financial crisis has had a disproportionate negative effect on women in many countries, including by limiting their access to the labour market and the reduction of funding for programmes and services used by women and which employ mainly women.

Closing gender gaps through economic and social policies

14. Gender equality is not only a human rights issue but it will also have strong and positive effects on the economy. Excluding women from full and equal access to all sectors of the labour market represents a tremendous economic loss for society. Increased participation in the labour market and access to good quality jobs is not only a foundation for women's economic independence and empowerment, but also a driver of national economic prosperity. Improved participation of women in decision-making structures in private companies would have positive implications for corporate governance and entrepreneurial success.

15. Challenges in regard to women and the economy were highlighted in the national reports, the panel discussion and the interventions. They vary across countries and subregions, reflecting differences in the economic structures and institutions. Well-designed labour market policies and laws on gender equality can make a difference. However, their implementation remains insufficient.

16. The meeting addressed the issue of the gender pay gap, focusing on existing practices and tools to collect and reveal data on wage differences in companies as well as mechanisms to address equal pay remuneration for work of equal value.

17. A disproportionate number of women are still in low-paid jobs which are considered low-skilled, though they are often under-valued. In particular the precarious situation of domestic workers – who are usually women – remains largely invisible and ignored.

18. Discriminatory stereotypes persist that prevent women and men from making non-traditional choices and thereby perpetuate occupational segregation. Discriminatory stereotypes are a key cause of the gender pay gap.

19. The existing patterns of gender and family relations prevent both women and men from reconciling work and family life and reduce women's income potential at multiple points throughout the life cycle. Appropriate social policies are required to address systemic gender inequalities and close gender gaps, in particular for mothers.

20. Women engaged in entrepreneurial activities, both as self-employed and as providers of additional employment opportunities, benefit society as a whole and thus contribute to sustainable development as well as women's economic independence.

21. Policy recommendations:

(a) Ratify and implement the 5 key gender equality International Labour Organization Conventions namely: Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers (G) in order to, among other things, ensure decent jobs for women.

(b) Ensure maternity protection and benefits for all women.

(c) Introduce paternity leave and parental leave schemes and shared parental leaves in order to decrease women's unpaid childcare burden, and shape public opinion about family care as being both men and women's equal responsibility.

(d) Provide sufficient resources to create enough pre-school and childcare services in parallel with childcare policies (for men and women) that allow women to participate in the labour market and encourage men to take more responsibility for childcare.

(e) Employers and their associations to put into practice flexible working arrangements for men and women having to take care of family members, including older relatives.

(f) Tackle gender pay gaps through promoting and ensuring the rights to equal remuneration for work of equal value, with the support of workers' and employers' organizations, and professional and women's associations and through the adoption of an appropriate legislative framework.

(g) Repeal laws restricting the work women can do, unless directly related to maternity protection.

(h) Develop and strengthen the implementation of policies to appropriately value and increase wages in female-dominated sectors.

(i) Encourage and strengthen women's entrepreneurship through supporting and upgrading women's skills and knowledge.

(j) Introduce relevant tax policies, simplify bureaucratic procedures for starting a business, and provide long term and low interest rate loans with government guarantees/subsidies that would help enable women entrepreneurs.

(k) Ensure that fiscal policies are gender-responsive and do not reinforce existing inequalities.

(l) Design labour market policies to achieve decent work that are inclusive and target groups of women particularly vulnerable to discrimination, including domestic

workers, those in rural areas, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and workers in the informal economy.

(m) Use public procurement as a tool for supporting women's entrepreneurship and businesses that promote full equality of women employees.

(n) Increase leadership training and mentoring schemes for women.

(o) Address issues of insufficient pension coverage and social security for older women.

(p) Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination to leverage the state's regulatory and strategic role in achieving women's rights and gender equality. National strategies must aim to bring together and achieve coherence between the disparate strategies implemented by different governmental institutions.

(q) Strengthen social dialogue and create new platforms for inclusive policy discussions involving women workers, including those in the informal economy.

Women's representation in policy and decision-making

22. In the ECE region, equal representation of men and women in different power and decision-making bodies is still far from reality in most of the countries, despite notable advances in a number of countries.

23. In 2013, only 1 out of every 4 parliamentarians in ECE countries was a woman, but the share varied from 9 to 40 per cent. Gender quotas have been introduced in some countries, but in the ECE region as whole women remain on average underrepresented in key decision-making spheres, such as economic policy-making, local governments, law enforcement, political leadership, trade unions, civil society organizations and communities.

24. Policy recommendations:

(a) The introduction of well-designed legislative gender quotas should be considered as they have proven to be effective measures to promote women's participation in parliaments and other elected bodies, civil service as well as corporate boards. Quotas are particularly effective when they include clear quantitative objectives, timelines and sanctions for non-compliance.

(b) In addition to legislative quotas, complimentary measures supporting women with training, mentoring in education, job promotion, etc. should be implemented.

(c) Private business should be engaged in promoting women to board and other senior-level positions and take active measures, including gender training to ensure gender equality in the workplace. Gender equality must be put at the center of the company's strategy; it has to be achieved and sustained. Governments should work with the private sector to drive voluntary business-led initiatives to improve organizational culture around gender equality, and share best practice.

(d) Attention should be drawn to female and male role models representing successful examples of reconciliation of work with private life to promote women's participation in public life and their advancement in the workplace.

(e) Promote women's representation in academic areas, think tanks and research institutions.

(f) Engage mass media and other opinion-makers in challenging traditional norms and ideas about the role of men and women, and in eliminating derogatory gender stereotypes that hinder women's participation in decision-making.

(g) The role of male-dominated institutions should be redefined and better aligned with the interests and needs of women to facilitate increased women's participation at all levels.

Preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls

25. Gender-based violence penetrates all areas of life and affects women of all ages worldwide today. Despite policy efforts undertaken over the last two decades, it continues to exist in all countries of the ECE region.

26. No custom, tradition, culture, religion or practice can justify violence against women and girls nor serve to avoid state obligations to prevent and eliminate it and to prosecute the perpetrators.

27. Violence against women and girls is a severe violation of human rights and a particularly severe form of discrimination. It has short- and long-term adverse consequences on women's and girls' health, including their sexual and reproductive health.

28. Violence against women and girls continues to exist in many forms in the region: physical abuse, sexual harassment and rape, stalking, so-called "honour killings", trafficking, and female genital mutilation. Child, early and forced marriage leads to forced sexual relations and has serious negative impact on girls' education, health and long-term prospects and cannot be justified on cultural grounds. New forms of assaults against women and girls increasingly occur online and through social media.

29. Governments have made some, however insufficient, progress towards achieving Strategic Objective D of the Beijing Platform for Action. Violence against women is now widely condemned by law and both awareness and attention have grown. More countries have set up comprehensive national policies and national coordinating bodies. There are also increased efforts to train professionals working with women victims of violence. The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) has been ratified by 15 countries in the region, with another 21 having signed it.

30. Policy recommendations:

(a) All countries in the ECE region should ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention. The Convention is the "prime example" of a legal and policy framework that provides a blueprint for national authorities to draw up and implement comprehensive and coordinated policies involving government agencies, Civil Society Organizations as well as national, regional and local parliaments and authorities, and international organizations.

(b) All governments should develop comprehensive strategies and policies to prevent violence against women and girls, to protect and support the victims and to prosecute and punish the perpetrators. Specific actions are required to fight against women trafficking and domestic violence.

(c) Measures should be designed to reinforce the institutional capacities for the implementation of the respective legislation and policies, including training of service providers, health professionals, teachers, police, prosecutors, etc.

(d) Specialized services and care for women and girls victims of violence should be established country-wide and strengthened. Increased budgetary allocations should be

accompanied by a holistic response to their needs, including financial support when returning from shelters to the community.

(e) The role of media in spreading perceptions and stereotypes that reinforce gender inequality should be addressed, as well as new forms of online and social media violence.

(f) Educational campaigns in various forms should target the entire population, including potential victims, perpetrators and key actors that can prevent victimization. Education should include the sensitization of boys and men, and address social norms and attitudes that regard women and girls as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that incite or perpetuate violent or coercive practices.

(g) Strengthening data collection, expanding research work and surveys on gender-based violence and its root causes need to be given priority attention. Administrative data systems need to be strengthened, and data and survey results made available for the public. The ECE Statistical Division can contribute to fill this gap.

(h) Cross-regional cooperation and exchange of experience and lessons learned in the implementation of legislation and policies aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls should be strengthened.

Governance and gender justice

31. Access to justice is not only a right in itself but also a strategy to realize other rights, challenge discrimination and achieve equality between men and women. It is not only a human rights issue, but also a rule of law and a sustainable development issue: there cannot be rule of law and sustainable development without access to justice for all women and girls.

32. Despite increased awareness and advance in legal expertise on discrimination and women's rights, possibilities for women and girls to claim redress when their rights have been violated are insufficient. In many countries, it is still not accepted that a woman, and even less a child, would seek redress in cases of discrimination.

33. Barriers to women's and girls' access to justice include lack of awareness about rights and where to seek redress, court fees, fear of stigma, lack of support services for women seeking justice and social and cultural barriers that make it unacceptable for women and girls to bring about a complaint against a family or community member. Women from disadvantaged groups, including migrant and trafficked women, women from minority communities, women with disabilities and women from rural areas often face particular difficulties in reporting violations of their rights.

34. Although most ECE countries are Parties to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Convention (CEDAW), many face difficulties in fully implementing it. The CEDAW Committee is currently developing a General Comment on Access to Justice.

35. Across the ECE region ad-hoc bodies and inter-ministerial structures have been created. Women's human rights and gender equality have been integrated into the work of national human rights bodies. The capacities of national mechanisms to implement, coordinate, and monitor gender equality policies, and their possibility to hold others accountable, however, remain limited. They often lack adequate resources, and good coordination between the various parts remains a challenge.

36. Policy recommendations:

- (a) Gender equality policies and mechanisms for legal enforcement of these policies should take into account the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women, particularly women from vulnerable groups.
- (b) Discrimination against women and girls should be clearly defined by law so as to be enforceable in courts. Legislation should not only protect, but also promote gender equality and prevent rights violations.
- (c) Timely, quality and effective remedies for violations of their rights should be guaranteed to all women and girls. Free legal aid accessible to the most vulnerable population is to be institutionalized and sufficiently resourced.
- (d) Civil and criminal courts should be sensitized to gender-based violence and trafficking issues, and enabled to hear girl victims in a child-sensitive manner.
- (e) The specific rights of women and girls in justice processes should be systematically incorporated in national curricula for the police, prosecution and judiciary.
- (f) Mediation and conciliation mechanisms should be encouraged to solve community and family disputes, but should not be used in cases of violence due to a high risk of secondary victimization.
- (g) Legal and paralegal aid, including free legal aid when necessary, should be promoted and professionals should be trained to adequately address the particular rights and needs of women and girls.
- (h) Ombudsmen, national human rights institutions or similar mechanisms should be established in compliance with the Paris Principles and enabled to support women and girls seeking remedy.
- (i) Outreach services providing women and girls with information about their rights and support when claiming redress should be promoted, with a particular focus on rural areas. These services should be owned by the community and employ trained community members able to provide paralegal support.
- (j) Social norms that make it unacceptable for women and girls to seek redress for violations of their rights should be addressed, including through awareness raising campaigns and the involvement of respected role models.
- (k) Gender equality should to be central to all national and local development strategies.
- (l) The effectiveness of mainstreaming mechanisms should be measured with specific and measurable indicators. Women's and girls' access to justice and the implementation of related laws should be closely monitored by governments using clear indicators of compliance.
- (m) The role of civil society in supporting women and girls in accessing justice should be promoted and reinforced. Promoting community initiatives to access legal information and information in local communities can be cost effective ways of increasing the share of women seeking justice for rights violations.
- (n) Where needed, efforts to increase birth registration for girls and women and registration of marriages should be stepped up in order to protect them from future rights violations.
- (o) The participation of women in decision-making in general and justice institutions in particular should be further promoted.

(p) Gender equality should be made a top priority for governments and ministers to help overcome resource constraints and foster inter-sectoral cooperation. Gender impact assessments should be part of good governance to achieve gender mainstreaming.

The way forward: gender equality for inclusive and sustainable societies

37. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are as relevant today as they were twenty years ago. The meeting confirmed that they have proven their lasting specific value in guiding action in all member States for the advancement of women. Governments and all actors addressed in the Beijing documents should be encouraged to finally implement the commitments undertaken in Beijing in 1995.

38. Despite progress, the current pace of change is too slow. There is a need to develop and implement comprehensive, well-funded strategies to accelerate change. This requires a transformational agenda. We call for actions by all stakeholders. It is now time for all actors addressed in the Beijing documents to redouble their efforts, at the national, regional as well as at the international level.

39. The post-2015 development agenda represents an opportunity to reaffirm that gender equality is a pre-condition for sustainable development. There is a need to maintain high ambitions for gender equality and human rights for women and girls in the negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

40. The post-2015 development agenda should ensure a human rights-based approach and have a strong focus on the empowerment and rights of women and girls and gender equality, including as a stand-alone goal with gender-sensitive targets and indicators in all other Sustainable Development Goals.

41. Gender equality should also be a priority for the allocation of public budgets and for the Means of Implementation for the post-2015 sustainable development goals.

42. Governments should lead change, introducing the necessary legal amendments and adopting ambitious policy goals. National gender machineries have to be strengthened to ensure that they have proper authority, capacity and resources to effectively mainstream gender in governmental work in all twelve critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. However, the scale of the transformation required also demands the strong involvement of the private sector and civil society.

43. It is crucial to ensure human rights for all women and men, including national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, older women, migrant and indigenous women, women with disabilities, rural women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

44. Preventing and combating violence against women and girls are essential preconditions for equitable and inclusive sustainable development. Governments must at all levels use all appropriate means to prevent such violence, support the victims, and investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and end impunity.

45. Increasing women's economic participation is a precondition for their empowerment and economic independence and it has a positive overall economic impact. We must raise awareness, tackle stereotypes and empower women to make non-traditional choices and to climb the decision-making ladder. Key for this is to support women and men in their efforts to reconcile work, family and private life.

46. Sexual and reproductive health and rights remains an area where there is a critical need to carry out more effective actions. Without guaranteeing these rights, including by expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and health services, and strengthening access to comprehensive sexuality education, we will not be able to efficiently empower women, eliminate discrimination, achieve gender equality and improve quality of life for all.

47. Legal frameworks and instruments to protect women's rights have an important role to play, including the implementation of the CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention.

48. The implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 is crucial to address gender-based violence in conflict situations and to involve women actively in peace processes.

49. In order to speed up change, it is essential that more men and boys are involved as agents for change in gender equality issues. Awareness and education initiatives on the benefits of gender equality for both men and women, and sharing of best practice appear as key elements to promote this engagement. There is a need to understand how social norms change and how this change can be influenced by policies in order to make gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls a reality.

Annex II

Declaration and Recommendations

Adopted by the Geneva NGO Forum on Beijing +20 on 5 November 2014

act | advance | achieve | women's rights
Every Woman, Every Right, Every Minute
Everyone is Responsible. The Time is Now.

We, the 700 participants in our diversity from around 350 groups, networks, and institutions and 56 countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, gathered in Geneva from 3 to 5 November 2014 for the NGO Forum review of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and recommendations for the future,

We recognize and celebrate the significant achievements made in this region impacting women's lives, as well as at policy and institutional levels.

However, the ECE region is economically and socially diverse, and many changes over the last 20 years raise **deep concerns** for sustainability, women's and human rights. We are at a tipping point as a region with convergence of multiple crises: financial, energy, climate and food. The austerity measure response to the economic and financial crises has resulted in unprecedented unemployment, drastic cuts to public expenditures, and household level social and economic insecurity, disproportionately impacting women and girls. We recognize the global demographic shift to an aging population - particularly relevant to our ECE region. The global gap between rich and poor grows daily.

We face myriad threats to the Beijing commitments. Women experience time poverty; overburdened by unrecognized unpaid work. In addition to gender mainstreaming, we must urgently address the root causes of inequality. Violations of and threats to girls and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights call for protection and advancement of the BPA and prior commitments, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the post 2015 agenda. Transformation requires addressing the structural and macro issues that perpetuate inequalities, discrimination and exclusion.

The increase in violent extremism, bio-politics, and wide range of population phobias, has resulted in gross violations of human rights of women and girls. Militarization is increasingly used as the answer to conflict, leading to skyrocketing military and arms expenditures at the expense of social and human rights protections.

The approach to development cooperation has been shifting, inextricably linking development, aid, trade, investment and foreign policy; reducing women's rights to a sub-text of global capitalism rather than central to achievement of peace and sustainable development. Financing for civil society and women's organizing has been reduced to government subcontracting, jeopardizing fundamental civil society self-organizing and partnership.

We are especially appalled by the situation of women in specific regions on particular issues. Increasing unemployment in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, and complacency toward women's issues in Western Europe and North America, reinforce and compound one another. Violence against women and girls remains pervasive, and is further perpetuated through technology and social media. Racial discrimination, especially against migrants who are often undocumented and have no public voice, results in gross violations of women's rights. Women in vulnerable situations, including Indigenous women and

women with disabilities, experience disproportionate rights violations; while girls and older women lack social protections.

Therefore, we call for:

1. Fulfilment of the Beijing commitments to all human rights and systematic implementation of a women's rights approach delivered through and monitored by strong well-funded institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; buttressed by an accountability, resourcing, tax and public fiscal and revenue framework capable of sustainably financing progressive realization of women's human rights.
2. Women are at the heart of sustainable development; the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda must include a clear and stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's rights with clearly articulated means of implementation for women's rights and empowerment. Girls and women's rights must be recognized throughout the other SDG goals and specific strategies.
3. CEDAW must remain the framework for monitoring and accountability of BPA commitments.
4. Demand women's equal access to resources including land, credit and funding towards intergenerational social, cultural, development, environmental, economic, civil and political rights and justice.
5. Robust and sustained investment in women and girls' rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights; ending violence against all women and girls; and particularly ending child, early and forced marriage as well as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
6. Urgent and systematic focus on women of all ages as users, shapers and leaders of new technologies.
7. Sharing power with young women and girls as leaders and agents of change and ensure responsibility and accountability of men and boys for gender equality.

Our recommendations

1. Women's rights are human rights: accountability and resources

(a) Resource full commitment and implementation of CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, United Nations Resolution 1325 and all human rights instruments as the global policy framework for women's rights, empowerment, and gender equality and ensure mainstreaming across all post-2015 SDGs and frame as a stand-alone goal.

(b) Adequately fund women's organizations and civil society for advancing and implementing the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action and the post-2015 agenda.

(c) Implement and enforce existing laws and policies that protect human rights for all women, every minute and everywhere, especially for girls, young women and older women, ethnic minorities, indigenous women, Roma women and girls, women with disabilities, rural women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

(d) Ensure access to justice redress and remedial actions in cases of violations of women's human rights, including by developing and fully funding legal aid systems, accessible to all women especially in rural areas and vulnerable situations, and supporting the legal literacy of all women and girls.

(e) Ensure the collection of comprehensive gender, age and disability disaggregated data in all statistical fields.

(f) Ensure full civil and birth registration for all.

2. Violence against women and conflict : building a culture of peace

i. Violence against women

(a) Prevent and eliminate, through effective implementation, all forms of violence against women of all ages, indigenous women, women with disabilities, widows, single mothers, women in conflict and post-conflict settings, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, and rural women.

(b) Eradicate harmful practices including discrimination against widows, FGM, sexualization, and child, early and forced marriage.

(c) Grant migrant women and undocumented women who are victims of forced prostitution and trafficking with residence permits, and develop prevention policies in countries of origin.

(d) Sign, ratify and effectively implement the Istanbul Convention on violence against women.

(e) Ensure national laws criminalize non-State torture perpetrated by non-State actors and hold perpetrators accountable for gender-based non-State torture crimes.

(f) Transform gender stereotypes that normalize and trivialize violence against women and girls.

(g) Redefine masculinities and increase participation and accountability of men and boys in violence prevention and gender equality.

(h) End criminalization of victims and impunity of perpetrators through effective gender justice systems, and acting in solidarity with women and girls experiencing conflict, forced prostitution, occupation, violations of sexual and reproductive rights, and situations of crisis including in Ukraine and Palestine.

(i) Partner with faith based communities and cultural leaders to prevent violence against women and girls.

(j) Establish non-discriminatory reporting systems and support victims during legal processes including through gender sensitivity training of police and legal professionals.

(k) Provide One-Stop Centres with medical/legal/social supports for victims, and fully resource short-term shelters and permanent affordable housing for women and children as well as vocational training for survivors.

(l) Address new and emerging forms of violence against women and girls, including violence as a consequence of new technologies, and ensure cyber safety for girls.

ii. Women and conflict

(a) Reduce military expenditure by a minimum of 2 per cent per annum and robustly resource development to ensure progressive realization of social and economic rights from a gender perspective.

(b) Ensure conflict prevention by transforming the gendered power structures that facilitate and encourage violence, conflict and occupation.

(c) Resource implementation of resolution 1325 through applying affirmative action/quota systems for decision-making in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace-making and peace building.

(d) Ensure the equal participation of women in peace processes by providing financial support to organize during and post-conflict and under occupation, and engage in meaningful consultations.

(e) Prioritize support for women in situations of displacement to end their invisibility; address issues such as sexual violence, murders under the discourse of honour, civil status and statelessness, and trafficking and sexual exploitation.

(f) Grant asylum to women and children on the basis of sexual and gender-based violence and conflict.

3. Poverty, economics and social development : money matters

(a) Develop an alternative macro-economic framework, based on women's human rights approaches, that institutionalizes feminist economics at all levels and in all policy domains. Facilitate monitoring by women's organizations.

(b) Institutionalize and implement gender responsive budgeting at all levels and in all policy domains, including in government procurement policies.

(c) Reform all national tax and other fiscal systems to provide progressive redistributive tax revenues that generate annual revenues sufficient to finance the progressive realization of women's rights, and eliminate all gender discrimination and sex role stereotypes embedded in tax and spending measures.

(d) Eliminate the gender pay-gap and take necessary steps to ensure equal pay for work of equal value.

(e) Ensure labour market policies and practices recognize and value motherhood and family care work, ensure support to balance these responsibilities with flexible work and careers and take effective measures to close the gender pension gap.

(f) Recognize the social and economic value of unpaid care work, and reduce the negative gendered impacts on women through redistribution of care services within and between households and adequate government services.

(g) Address women's time poverty by resourcing and ensuring access to high-quality public services and infrastructure including clean water, energy, transportation, information and communication technologies, health care and childcare.

(h) Adopt, implement and enforce laws on social protection and against all forms of gender-based discrimination in the labour market and within the economy, including the informal economy.

(i) Ensure women's access to safe, secure and adequately paid work, free of intimidation, harassment and violence.

(j) Promote women's entrepreneurship and economic autonomy through equal access to education, training, resources and innovation, with special focus on women in vulnerable situations.

(k) Austerity measures have had a disproportionate negative impact on women, increasing women's precarious and unpaid care work. Ensure and extend the provision of social protection in times of economic crisis, especially for part-time workers, unpaid care givers, and women working in informal sectors or precarious jobs.

(l) Implement a broad-based program of study and knowledge mobilization on the causes of poverty in response to the unacceptable rates of people living under and around the poverty line in ECE countries.

(m) Regulate and hold companies based in ECE countries accountable for women's rights and abuses, including banks and multinationals, especially in extractive industries in countries around the world. Use the United Nations guiding principle for Business and Human Rights as a basis for legal frameworks.

(n) Introduce disability-responsive budgeting; invest in programmes to address lack of education and unemployment among women and girls with disabilities; ensure lifelong protection of human rights.

4. Participation and decision-making: shifting power

(a) Implement measures to achieve an equal distribution of decision-making power between women and men, including parity/quotas in political leadership, economic governance and all other sectors, and ensure leadership that advances women's rights.

(b) Adopt proportional representation or mixed systems as preferred electoral systems to achieve gender parity in decision making.

(c) Ensure adequate financial, moral, social support and opportunities for all women's effective participation and decision-making in political and public life.

(d) Strengthen mechanisms for young women's participation in political leadership.

(e) Support civic dialogue and protect human rights activists/defenders.

(f) Deliver a Fifth World Conference on Women to address emerging gender equality issues and women's access to power and decision-making.

(g) Ensure strong and robustly funded institutional mechanisms, national and international human rights machineries, independent human rights institutions, ombudspersons and comprehensive monitoring frameworks to protect achievements from being eroded and to further advocate and advance gender equality and women's rights.

(h) Ensure public sector and parliamentary accountability to women's rights and empowerment through gender-responsive policy, budgeting and programmes.

5. Environment and climate justice: people and planet

(a) Systematically include a women's rights and gender equality perspective in all aspects of domestic and development environmental, climate, water, forest, biodiversity, transport and energy policy, research and data collection at all levels.

(b) Incorporate intergenerational and gender equality perspectives in climate and environmental decision-making, policy and programmes.

(c) Ensure legal and policy protection of indigenous and women's access, control and ownership rights in land and natural resources, extraction and pollution prevention, especially from private interests and transnational corporations including in post-conflict, post-disaster and post-displacement situations.

(d) Invest in innovative alternative technologies and recognize and value indigenous-owned knowledge for environmental and climate justice.

(e) Prevent and monitor the trafficking of women and girls following environmental and climate-related disasters.

(f) Hold ECE-based corporations accountable for women's rights violations, including gender-based and sexual violence, in all communities where industries are located, including outside of this region.

(g) Ensure adequate resourcing for environmental and climate justice, including for eliminating reliance on high risk energy sources such as fossil fuels and nuclear energy, especially for communities at risk and for women's networks and organizations as partners for change.

6. Human rights and migrant women: together in solidarity

(a) Uphold and promote equality and non-discrimination for all migrant women, recognizing first and foremost their humanity and dignity.

(b) Extend the Beijing Platform for Action with specific reference to the inclusion of all migrant women and girls, regardless of status.

(c) Ratify and fully implement all international conventions on migration as well as international labour standards to strengthen the protection of migrant women.

(d) Empower migrant women to self-organize, and support migrant women's organizations including networking and advocacy.

(e) Recognize and regularize all migrant women and their children; extend social protection, social security, and full health care, including covering sexual and reproductive health and rights, to all migrant women and girls.

(f) Support migrant family unity and integrity by family reunification policies and an immediate end to deportation practices that separate families.

(g) Provide equal treatment for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced women.

(h) Provide quality secondary, vocational, and tertiary education and lifelong learning for migrant girls and women, particularly to support integration and access to employment.

(i) Allocate robust financial, political, diplomatic and legislative resources and efforts to prevent trafficking of girls and women, recognizing the lifelong impacts of displacement, lack of legal protection, and associated trauma.

7. Women and health: well-being for all

(a) Protect women's rights and freedom of choice to control their body, fertility and sexuality.

(b) Ensure political will, commitment to and investment in making sexual and reproductive health and rights a reality for all, including ensuring access to age-appropriate evidence-based comprehensive sexuality and HIV education, as well as

women's and girls' access to legal, safe, modern and free contraception, abortion services and family planning to end preventable maternal mortality and morbidity.

(c) Urgently address the emerging incidence of sex selection and foetal abortion in some ECE countries.

(d) Ensure accessible, affordable and quality health care services for all to ensure health for women and reduce women's unpaid care burden.

(e) Ensure women's equal access to health care services throughout their life course, including women's shelters, without discrimination based on legal or migration status, disability, sex work, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, age or religion.

(f) Ensure gender specific health research and medical practices.

(g) Provide comprehensive mental health care services and support for all women of all ages.

(h) Provide effective health care services targeted at non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, heart disease

(i) Support and promote nutrition for holistic health and well-being.

(j) Ensure every woman has access to a clean and healthy environment, especially water, sanitation, and clean cooking technologies.

8. Girls, ageing and intergenerational justice : building a common future

(a) Adopt an intergenerational justice approach to women's human rights and empowerment, recognizing the specific priorities, needs and circumstances of women at different of stages of their life course, especially girls and older women, and mothers.

(b) Eliminate age-based stereotypes which undermine the full potential and effective participation and leadership of women and girls of all ages.

(c) Develop an international convention on the rights of older persons, incorporating rights articulated in CEDAW.

(d) Raise and implement the legal minimum age of marriage to 18, as part of full implementation of Communications Regulation Commission and CEDAW, in all countries where this has not yet been done.

(e) Recognize young women as a critical population group in achieving development and ensure young women's effective participation in leadership and decision-making at all levels.

(f) Ensure older women adequate income to live in dignity and implement social protection laws and policies that enable older women to be autonomous, full participants in the development of society.

(g) Recognize and address the intergenerational and intersectional dimensions of all forms of violence, abuse and neglect.

(h) Collect, analyse, report and utilize data disaggregated by sex, age, disability and marital status.

(i) Enable age-friendly rural and urban physical and social environments, structures and services accessible to and inclusive of older women with varying capacities, and women with disabilities.

(j) Ensure mutual respect and equal partnership between girls and boys and among women and girls of all ages.

9. Education, science, technology and innovation : transformation for all

(a) Fulfil every woman's and girl's right to safe, quality free education including primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education.

(b) Promote the importance of girls' education, providing incentives to encourage communities in vulnerable situations to send their daughters to school, and eliminate discrimination against children from minority ethnic and social groups.

(c) Include human rights education in school curricula at all levels to promote of culture of peace, inclusion, respect for diversity and women's rights.

(d) Use Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to increase access to quality education and build platforms for cooperation and networking to facilitate advancement of women.

(e) Ensure use of ICTs in schools, include STI in curricula, enhance girls' awareness and involvement in STI, hence increasing the digital and scientific literacy of women and girls.

10. Media and communications : breaking stereotypes

(a) Develop effective legislation and gender-responsive policy that prohibits sex/gender discrimination in all forms of media and communications, and establish regulatory and monitoring mechanisms.

(b) Ensure media regulation to stop the proliferation of negative and violent images, videos and stereotypes that degrade and undermine the dignity of women, and violate their rights and privacy.

(c) Develop and regularize training on women's rights and gender stereotypes for all media professionals.

(d) Support, develop and finance alternative media, created and owned by women, that portrays women as leaders and positive role models working for development and peace.

(e) Ensure protection for women journalists and human rights defenders, especially in politically sensitive environments including conflict situations.

(f) Harness the potential of social media to advance women's human rights and empowerment while ensuring adequate protection, privacy and safety of women.

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