

**South Asia Statement**

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*adopted at the*

**South Asia Consultation on  
BEIJING+15**

**Weaving Wisdom, Confronting Crises,  
Forging the Future**

**17-18 December 2009  
New Delhi, India**



# "Women Redefining"

**W**e, approximately 100 participants, from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, met in New Delhi on 17 and 18 December 2009 for the **South Asia Consultation on Beijing+15**.

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

## Reclaiming their Spaces"

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 theatre 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 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.*

*"South Asian Women: Together for Equality with Dignity,  
Progress with Sustainability."*

The South Asia Consultation for Beijing+15 was organised by South Asia Women's Watch and National Alliance of Women, India (with support from UNIFEM). Full report of the Consultation is available from the SAWW Focal Points:

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