

## **ASIA PACIFIC BEIJING+20 CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM STATEMENT**

*Women's rights organisations and movements from Asia and the Pacific, comprising 480 women, gathered in Bangkok on 14-16 November 2014 to call on our governments for accountability for the commitments made almost twenty years ago in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to advance gender equality and the rights of women and girls, and to realise our aspiration for a region that is defined by development, economic, social, gender and environmental justice. We remind ourselves that the BPFA drew its mandate and inspiration from earlier global agreements, such as, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions and the Vienna Conference on Human Rights.*

Almost twenty years ago, the world's leaders came together to collectively advance our rights at the Fourth World Conference on Women, making an unprecedented commitment that was enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Five years later, the Millennium Declaration was adopted which reinforced the principles of human dignity, equality, and equity at the global level and reconfirmed respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as respect for the equal rights of all.

Today, we find ourselves in a world defined by deep and entrenched inequalities. Gender inequality reinforces and is itself reinforced by the extraordinary levels of inequality in wealth, power, and resources experienced by women in Asia and the Pacific. The architecture of globalization has resulted in wealth being concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority of obscenely rich individuals. Globally, the sixty-five richest people in the world have as much combined wealth as the 3.5 billion poorest, which is half of the world's population.

In Asia, 0.001% of the population owns 30% of the region's wealth. These few people own seventeen times more wealth than the least developed countries in Asia combined.

In a region that has two-thirds of the world's poorest people, women comprise the majority of the poor. Migrant, indigenous, refugee, rural, urban poor, women living with disabilities, women and girls living with HIV, ethnic minorities, caste and women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are the most likely to experience marginalisation and a denial of their human rights.

Today we also find ourselves in a moment of reflection, as governments consider their progress under the Beijing Platform for Action and deliberate on a new development agenda that must avert the social, economic, and environmental crises that we face. In this moment, we demand that governments finally deliver on the promises made in Beijing.

The single greatest barrier to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is the lack of binding, meaningful accountability mechanisms. Governments derive their mandate from their capacity to be accountable to their constituents. Accountability requires time-bound targets, transparent reporting and monitoring, adequate funding and resources and yet it requires so much more.

Genuine accountability means that governments at national and local levels should have a clear role in ensuring implementation and establish annual parliamentary reporting mechanisms. Genuine accountability means that civil society must be able to access government policies, data and decision-making process at all levels. It is unacceptable that civil society representatives are prevented from attending civil society forums by their own governments. National women's machinery must have an all-of-government mandate to ensure all critical areas of concern are implemented in their entirety. They must have the mandate to review and amend policy that undermines the Beijing Platform for Action and other obligations.

Genuine accountability means that the least powerful amongst us are able to hold the most powerful to account for their actions.

Genuine accountability means that we can hold parliamentarians, officials, corporations and the individuals within them to account for their direct and indirect violations of women's human rights.

But most significantly accountability requires access to justice, remedies, accountability requires reparations, accountability requires justice.

We reiterate the civil society call from this region for governments to commit to Development Justice. Embedded in a commitment to human rights, Development Justice requires governments to end the gross inequalities of wealth, power, resources and opportunities that exist between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women. Development Justice requires implementation of five 'transformative shifts' – Redistributive Justice, Economic Justice, Environmental Justice, Gender, Sexual and Social Justice and Accountability to the Peoples.

**The women at the Asia Pacific Beijing+20 Civil Society Forum collectively recognise the following concerns and priorities for women in Asia and the Pacific regarding the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the post-2015 development agenda, and beyond.**

### **Women in Migration**

The nature of women's work in Asia and the Pacific has been fundamentally shaped by neoliberal economic reforms and development strategies adopted by governments in recent decades. One of the consequences of this has been the expansion by governments of avenues for labour migration across the region. Many states have actively supported migration of women, from the poorer countries of the region as a source of income to the economies of

countries of origin. There has been little focus across the region to putting in place the bilateral agreements that are essential to ensure that the rights of these workers are protected.

The primary reasons for women to undertake employment migration across borders, within and beyond sub-regions, are poverty, lack of viable alternate avenues of employment, economic insecurity at home. The lack of protective measures has meant that thousands of women are placed in extremely vulnerable positions, facing abuse and exploitation with little recourse to any forms of justice.

We recognize poverty as a cause and a consequence of migration, including forced migration. Rates of poverty are high with poverty among migrant families due to the high costs and low pay that many migrant workers experience. Many migrant women have limited options and negotiating power and this can make them targets for exploitative labour practices and violence. They undergo unregulated and long hours of work, low wages, lack of access to food, restrictions on mobility, rest and at times even the right to communicate with their families back home. Thousands of women migrate for employment as domestic workers; there is a growing phenomenon of thousands of others are trafficked as sex worker in and from the Asia Pacific.

Returnee women migrants often face stigma by people who assume they worked as migrant sex workers or were sexually active during their migration. Returnee women migrant workers are looked upon as having neglected their families by their absence during migration, they are made to take the blame for children dropping out of school, for 'allowing' incest to take place, for breaking up their families. These discriminatory attitudes against women migrant workers need to be challenged.

We acknowledge that where women have undertaken migration for employment as sex workers, the rights of sex workers and women's sexual autonomy needs to be recognized. Governments in countries of origin, transit and destination should recognize, respect and affirm women's right to health and their sexual and reproductive health and rights regardless of their status

Refugee and migrant women face a number of challenges including the lack of legal status, no right to work, limited access to education and health services, increased risk of arrest and detention, violence, xenophobia and discrimination by host communities. The lack of legal status is a key barrier to women's access to justice and security, and a key challenge to obtaining regular employment and securing access to services.

States should increase the economic agency of refugee and migrant women, by providing safe livelihood opportunities; decent work; safe and healthy workplaces; access to training and education; recognition of existing qualifications and the right to social protection across all formal and informal sectors.

We call on States to accede to relevant international legal instruments on refugee protection, statelessness, migrants' rights and related concerns, and develop strong regional mechanisms and national frameworks to ensure the protection of the rights of refugee and migrant women.

We call on Asia and Pacific governments to ratify and implement ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.

### **Women in Power**

Women in the Asia and Pacific Region continue to be systematically excluded from political spaces. In the Pacific, for example, women occupy only 3.4 per cent of parliamentary seats. We call on governments to ensure the full, equal and safe public and political participation of women at all levels of government, including through electoral and political reforms; strengthening the implementation of gender equality plans, policies and programs; ensuring gender-responsive budgeting and provision of a special fund for women standing in elections; and ensuring disaggregated data collection that is responsive to the needs of all women, particularly disadvantaged women. Further, we call for women's leadership to be increased at the international level, including in UN bodies and agencies.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

Sexual rights are human rights. Reproductive rights are human rights. If we cannot control our own bodies, sexualities, and fertility, we cannot exercise any of our other civil, political, economic, social or cultural rights. Sexual and reproductive health and rights must be guaranteed and entrenched in law and policy, and mechanisms must be established to address and redress violations of these rights.

Governments must ensure that all women and girls can exercise their right to a full range of quality, free, and comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive health information and services, including safe and legal abortion, provided through the public sector, without any form of stigma, discrimination, coercion or violence. Governments must revoke discriminatory and punitive laws and policies that undermine the sexual and reproductive health and rights of marginalized women and girls, including women and girls living with HIV, sex workers and entertainers, women who use drugs, women with disabilities, migrant and mobile women, lesbian and bisexual women, transgender people, elderly women, rural women, women working in the informal sector, and girls and young women. To guarantee these sexual and reproductive health and rights, governments must allocate financing to ensure the availability, acceptability, accessibility and quality of services and adopt mechanisms for accountability that including regular monitoring, redress mechanisms for violations. This process must be consultative and include the meaningful participation of NGOs, specifically women's and feminist organizations, ensuring their role in government accountability.

## **Women and Girls Living with HIV**

Women and girls living with HIV experience disproportionate levels of gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination and human rights violations. Key affected women, in particular, female sex workers, transgender people, women who use drugs, mobile and migrant women, and young women, are increasingly vulnerable to HIV infection. This increased vulnerability, limits the access of women and girls living with HIV to treatment, care and services. Governments must review and remove laws and policies that discriminate and/or criminalize sex workers, people who use drugs, mobile and migrant women and transgender people, including policies that conflate sex work with trafficking, criminalize HIV transmission, and deport migrants on the basis of HIV status.

Governments need to scale up interventions that end stigma and discrimination in health care settings for key affected women and girls, including prohibition of compulsory HIV and pregnancy testing, denial of services; subjection to degrading and/or humiliating treatment; forced contraception; forced sterilization and forced abortion. Governments must ensure that implementation and financing are targeted to key affected populations and their meaningful participation is included at all levels. Women's activist groups and policy makers need to address the issues of key affected women and girls. *Include us, support us. Nothing about us without us.*

## **Women and the International Economic Framework**

The realisation of women's human rights is fundamentally threatened by the dominant model of trade and investment, which has most recently found its expression in the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement. This Agreement alone threatens to undo the progress made under the Beijing Platform for Action. Women in this region have a long history of resisting trade, investment, and finance regimes that exacerbate the underdevelopment of developing countries, impose harmful policies of privatisation; liberalisation and deregulation; restrict the sovereign regulatory space of governments; exacerbate poverty; and violate individual and collective rights.

We demand transparency of, and inclusion in, the negotiation of these agreements, which affect livelihoods and lives. Women have the most to lose when healthcare services are privatised, land is sold in unscrupulous, un-transparent deals, and labour protections are deregulated. We call for global solidarity against the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the broader neoliberal trade and investment model. We call for governments to fulfil their extraterritorial human rights obligations, to hold transnational corporations accountable for human rights violations, and we call for development justice.

Gender equality and the achievement of women's rights necessitates labour reforms to build an inclusive labour market which secures women's equal access to decent work and a living wage, women's representation in labour

market institutions and decision-making more broadly, support for collective bargaining and the right to organise as well as the adoption of universal social protection.

### **Women and the Environment**

The issue of environmental sustainability must be integrated into every policy and discussion affecting women's human rights and women's livelihoods: there should not be a disconnect between human rights norms and the lexicon of environmental sustainability. The neoliberal paradigm of development must be challenged in order to combat corporate greed throughout the region. Women's organizations working on environmental justice issues must be recognized for their efforts to generate income for women, protect their human rights and right to natural resources, and continue to work towards climate change mitigation.

We urge governments to commit to a binding framework to reduce carbon emissions and to ensure accountability to the Rio Principles, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities; to strengthen education and capacity development that supports conversation, restoration, and sustainable development; further the understanding of the impact of gender inequality; strengthen integrated forest and coastal management institutions; develop and integrate disaster, risk and reduction strategies; increase women's role in governance; challenge public-private partnerships; and recognize women as agents of change and empowered scientists who work to safeguard their lives and livelihoods.

### **Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression**

The lived realities of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons is that there is often little acknowledgement of the discrimination and violence perpetrated because of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. We demand the recognition of the rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LBTI) persons' as human rights. We bring to your attention the rights of LBTI persons embodied in various internationally agreed upon documents, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CEDAW), Human Rights Convention, and the Beijing Platform for Action, which, in paragraph 96, protects "*the human rights of women, [which encompasses] their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.*"

Therefore, we urge governments to remove all discriminatory laws, policies, barriers and practices that discriminate against LBTI persons in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as ensure the realization of their sexual and reproductive rights. We call for the fulfillment of legal and ethical responsibility to protect the fundamental and full human rights for all, and ensure the health, well-being, protection and safety of all women, including LBTI people.

## **Violence against Women and Girls**

Violence against women and girls remains widespread, systematic, and culturally entrenched in the Asia and Pacific Region. Women continue to experience violence in both public and private domains, on a continuum that includes acts of harassment; murder, femicide, and the disappearance of women. The violence experienced by women and girls is amplified by changes in context such as, land grabbing, armed conflict, militarization, religious fundamentalism, pre and post disaster situations among others. These changes in context, together with attitudes and perceptions which are moulded by tradition and influenced by a neo-colonial culture, continue to violate the rights and welfare of women and girls.

Violence against women and girls is not simple and one-dimensional, rather it is characterised by intersectionality; a complex of being both a women / girl and a member of a marginalised group. It is essential to recognize the multiple and intersecting forms of violence faced by women and girls as a result of caste, sexuality and sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, disability, HIV, migration status, caste and occupation.

Targeted gender-based violence online such as cyber-stalking, harassment and misogynistic hate speech is increasingly being used to silence women and girls voices, and to keep them out of public spaces. There is a need to articulate the duties and responsibilities of States, private sector, inter-governmental institutions and other actors to include technology related forms of violence against women in their overall response and prevention efforts to end violence against women.

Eliminating violence against women and girls must be a priority for governments and civil society going into the post2015 agenda and should reflect a genuine commitment to transformative change through the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This commitment must include information, awareness, and campaigns which work to dismantle the cultural, social and contextual factors that lead to violence against women and girls; and appropriate budget allocation for services related to violence against women. We also demand State accountability to end impunity in cases of violence against women and girls by stringent monitoring of implementation of policies and legislations mandated to provide justice.

## **Women with Disabilities**

Women with disabilities are amongst the most likely to live in poverty; to be denied development rights; the right to makes choices over their own bodies; to achieve justice and access services when experiencing gender based violence; to enjoy education, meaningful and decent work; to control resources; and to participate in public life. Women with disabilities must be included at all levels to create a just and inclusive society, where women with disabilities live with dignity, respect, and equality. This requires a multi stakeholder approach which recognizes the contribution to and role of women

with disabilities in the Beijing +20 Review and takes into account the needs and issues of women and girls with disabilities.

We urge governments to undertake a holistic review of policies and governance structures around disability by consulting and involving persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls. In order to avoid discrimination and biases, and undertake a realistic, needs-based analysis that will lead towards achievable and inclusive legislation and action plans, it is essential to consult with and include women and girls with disabilities at all levels. There is also an urgent need for inclusive data collection, analysis and research on persons with disabilities which captures disaggregated data around age, gender, caste, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and cultural, religious, ethnic identity. We also call on State and non-state actors to incorporate opportunities for leadership development and participation in decision making by women and girls with disabilities.

### **Women and Armed Conflict**

Some of the world's most protracted armed conflicts are in the Asia Pacific region. Our region also has the highest numbers of subnational conflicts in the world, many of which are not recognised by our governments. Globalised militarisation coupled with regional and global vested interests in our region has made parts of the region a theatre of war.

Entrenched militarism has fostered suspension of the rule of law, poor governance, legitimisation of violence and repression, and a continuum of violence from the state and society to the family underpinned by a culture of all pervasive impunity. Rising religious fundamentalisms, extremism and the radicalization of societies in the name of religion has significantly impacted on women's human rights. It is critical to recognise that women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination – such as women from ethnic, religious, indigenous, sexual groups, women with disabilities, women-headed households including widows, single women as well as women ex-combatants and women human rights defenders – face heightened insecurity and vulnerability in conflict situations. A conflict prevention and transformative approach to development is therefore critical to addressing root causes of conflict and promoting long-term sustainable development, peace and justice.

Women have engaged extensively in conflict resolution, peace making and peace building in the region but have been allowed little role in formal mechanisms of peace making. This must be rectified urgently and women must be included at all levels of decision making so that women's lived experience in conflict resolution, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery efforts is recognized. We must redefine the meaning of 'peace', 'justice' and 'security' from the perspective of women to challenge the current State-centric definitions, so that women can reclaim their rights. We call on governments to adopt National Action Plans that incorporate the principles of UNSCR 1325 and CEDAW and on Critical Area E of the Beijing Platform and adhere to their obligations under CEDAW, to ensure that women enjoy



substantive equality including by creating monitoring and accountability mechanisms that are effective, participatory, and transparent.

We ask that governments provide long-term support and rehabilitation to women survivors, in a holistic way; reinforce mechanisms and upscale resources and funding to ensure safe spaces, protection and recovery of women and girl survivors of conflict. This includes creating avenues to involve women in peace processes, including forming women peace groups at local level. Governments must also ensure justice—as defined by local women—including transitional justice, and reparations for war crimes against women and an end to impunity for perpetrators of violence against women, with a view to strengthening the rule of law in regard to sexual violence and violence against women.

Finally, we ask that governments reduce defence budgets and ensure accountability and transparency in relation to military spending and ensure that the military is not engaged in civilian functions.

### **Rural Women**

Rural women, particularly peasants, agricultural workers, indigenous women, Dalit women, nomads, tribals, fisherwomen, informal women workers, and herders, are even more marginalized than most women, face multiple forms of discrimination and violence, and are hungrier and poorer than ever.

Rural women need genuine land reform. Rural women must be assured of the equal right to access, own, control and benefit from productive resources, including land, water, seeds, energy sources, livestock and fisheries, genetic resources, public subsidies and appropriate technologies. There must be the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of communities on all projects encroaching on agricultural and customary lands.

Communities need to have the right to determine their patterns of food production and consumption, and prioritise food production for domestic consumption: food sovereignty is key to food security and the eradication of poverty. Women have a significant role in providing food security and there must be active and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all decision-making processes concerning food and agriculture policies.

The onslaught of corporate-led agriculture, which is at the helm of accelerated land and resource-grabbing and destruction of biodiversity and ecology must be stopped. We call on governments to reject neo-liberal policies that force developing countries to adopt measures that favor large-scale agribusinesses over the interests of small food producers. Instead, states should improve livelihoods through smallholder agriculture and agro-ecological farming, connecting rural farmers with urban consumers, and building on local, indigenous and gender-based knowledge, employing biodiversity-based techniques with women at the core.

We demand the elimination of the use and trade of highly hazardous pesticides and genetically engineered crops and products; and holding agrochemical transnational corporations accountable for harm inflicted by these technologies to the environment and human health, especially of women and children. We demand governments develop and strengthen policies to encourage farmers to transition out of conventional chemical agriculture, which exacerbates food insecurity, towards biodiversity-based ecological agriculture; to promote climate change solutions in agriculture that aim at building community resilience to climate change impacts through ecological and sustainable agricultural practices.

### **Women & Girls' Access to Information**

Access to full and accurate information by women and girls continues to be a major challenge in many countries. Women and girls have the right to access information that they need, to empower them in making informed decisions about their bodies and lives.

Governments should invest and enable the education and training of women and girls, engaging them in important national, regional and international discussions to ground the decision making processes in the realities of women and girls in the Asia and Pacific Region.

We also call on governments to ensure that comprehensive sexuality education is incorporated in the national curriculum, and where this is not yet possible, to enable civil society and other stakeholders to provide this education widely, in and out of schools using formal, informal and non-formal education settings.

### **Women and the Media**

Access to the media must be universal. To address digital and media divides there must be political will of governments to address economic, social-cultural and political divides that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination against women. There must be increased support by government for women driven media that reaches different audiences with different needs.

We call on governments to develop media policies, practices and tools that respect women's human rights and gender equality and that eliminate gender stereotyping, biases, and discriminatory portrayals of women and other social groups in media. It is critical for government and civil society to promote media literacy that will provide women and girls to be more engaged in how media portrays them as well as digital literacy as a component of meaningful access enabling women and girls including the marginalised and under-represented communities in media to develop essential technical skills as users and consumers so they may become active agents who can participate fully in social and public life.

Governments must use gender audits such as the Global Media Monitoring project to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of content to ensure that government communication and media strategies effectively promote gender equality. This must also ensure an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions in all media institutions whether corporate or alternative including social media.

Strategies need to be developed for government and private media to work with women's media groups to conduct trainings, regarding appropriate language and understanding of gender issues. Internet governance and or regulations need to incorporate a gender perspective with the participation of women in all decision-making processes.

Internet and mobile phone service providers must develop corporate policies, practices and tools that respect women's rights and prevent technology-related forms of violence against women. Such policies must ensure the participation of women in internet governance processes and in telecommunications regulatory policies and ensure greater affordability of mobile, internet and other technologies for all, paying particular attention to addressing the gender gap in access.

### **Women's Human Rights and the Development Agenda**

In reflecting on the role of human rights in the development agenda, we note that they play an essential role in setting norms and standards, naming the rights, rights holders, duty bearers and their obligations. The universality and indivisibility of human rights ensures that development is holistic and reaches all without exception, not as "beneficiaries" but as "rights-holders."

CEDAW offers a holistic, rights based framework which must be implemented as the normative framework for the BPFA. There must be a continuous process of defining the content of normative standards based on the meaning of "substantive equality" as given in CEDAW. Intersectionality must be prioritised, recognizing the diversity of women and historic discrimination against women. All organs of the State, the executive, judiciary and the legislator, must be recognised to be responsible and accountable arms of the State and bound by treaty obligations.

Indicators for the stand alone gender equality goal in the post-2015 development agenda and the integration of women's human rights in all other goals must be finalised in adherence to CEDAW and other international human rights standards. Procedures and monitoring mechanisms must be clarified to ensure State accountability for the fulfillment of the Post Beijing goals and include women's participation.

We urge governments to accelerate the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

***The following priorities and concerns emerged from the sub-regional and young women's caucuses.***

## **Young Women's Caucus**

While there has been some progress made to improve the lives of young women in the region, there are still great battles to be won. We acknowledge progress made in the areas of education, particularly in primary enrolment of girls, in access to employment opportunities for young women, and increasing political participation and engagement of young women in national and regional platforms. However, young women continue to be left out of the conversation in many arenas. Young women have unique struggles and needs, and we urge governments and the international community to recognize and address those needs, to ensure the fulfilment of rights for all young women.

We call for the meaningful and effective participation of young women in political spaces, decision making platforms and accountability mechanisms. Governments must strengthen young women's economic empowerment through laws and policies that protect their right to equal employment and wage opportunities. We remind governments of their responsibility to protect young women and the girl child, including those from marginalized groups, the diversity of which encompasses lesbian, bisexual, transgender people, young women with different abilities, indigenous young women, young women living with HIV and AIDS, young women sex workers, young women using drugs, and young migrant workers, among others.

We call on governments to ensure the provision of accessible, affordable, non-judgemental, confidential and gender-sensitive youth-friendly services for all, including sexual and reproductive health and rights services and comprehensive sexuality education, recognizing young women's rights to these services and information. We also strongly recommend the expansion of the definition of violence against women to include the specific vulnerabilities faced by young women, to account for the emerging and multifaceted forms of violence, including early and forced marriage, online and cyberspace violence, dating violence, violence in educational institutions, harmful traditional practices, as well as in conflict and post-conflict situations.

## **South Asia Caucus**

We stress that VAW, such as, acid violence, dowry violence, honour killing, trafficking, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and witch hunting are intolerable indicators of discrimination. We observe that the interplay of rising fundamentalism and extremism has led to increased control of women. We are concerned about the entrenched militarization, non-recognition of sub-regional conflicts, poor governance, normalization of states of exception, increased military budgets, regional and global vested interests, and the rise of resource-based conflicts in the region. We understand that people continue to face exclusion, discrimination, and violence because of their sexual orientation, disabilities, caste, class, ethnic, tribal and indigenous identities.

We reiterate that governments are responsible to uphold their obligations even to extra-territorial violations by international financial institutions, private sector, third party states, and non-state actors.

We call on governments to urgently address the impunity of perpetrators of violence, ensure that structural discrimination such as caste based violence is not tolerated, enact laws and policies needed to tackle sexual harassment, and provide resources to civil society organizations.

We further call on states to commit to transitional justice processes, and initiate new jurisprudence enabling women to report current and past incidences of sexual violence in conflict.

We are concerned that the current model of development shaped by neo-liberal policies, degradation of the natural environment combined with retrogressive laws and geo-political imperatives escalate fundamentalisms and patriarchal inequalities that force women and girls to bear the burden of unsustainable economic growth. This has resulted in large-scale economic displacement and disempowerment of women, disruption of the social fabric, increased the burden of work, including unpaid care work. The feminization of poverty has increased disproportionately in South Asia through implementation of macroeconomic policies and withdrawal of the state from its responsibility in the core social sectors of livelihood, food security, health, welfare, and well-being and has forced women into exploitative migrant work both within and outside their countries of origin. We call on states to commit to: value, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid, care, and domestic work, and to ensure access to full employment, decent work and social protection floors for all; ensure decent work and a living wage for women and regularise the informal sector work; establish and strengthen institutional frameworks and mechanisms that ensure effective rights protection for documented and undocumented women migrant workers in countries of origin and destination

### **East Asia**

We in the East Asian region recognize the work being done in China, Korea and Japan to promote gender equality and the women and development agenda while also highlighting the need to strengthen government linkages with civil society. This is within the context of the rise of conservative governments across the region and a corresponding shrinking of an already limited space for civil society engagement.

Growing inequality across all sections of society is a key concern for women in the region. Unsustainable life style, the divide between urban and rural populations, and excessive capitalism have multifaceted and detrimental effects on women.

Violence against women continues to be a key issued faced by women in the East Asia region. Migrant women, women farmers, women refugees, LGBT women and elderly women in particular experience high levels of violence,

which points towards the need for a greater focus on marginalized sections of the population in order to meet the needs of women and reflect the reality on the ground.

While women's participation in politics and the formal economy has increased over the past years, it has not been translated into tangible social change. The patriarchal corporate culture which demands long working hours of employees prevents women from continuing working during pregnancy as well as after childbirth. Women's jobs are not secured after maternity leave and the glass ceiling for women still persists. In addition to the inequalities and discrimination that women face in the formal economy, women continue to be the primary caretakers of the family, including children, the sick, and the elderly; bearing the burden of the unpaid work whether or not they are active in labour force.

Gender-stereotyping continues to be perpetuated by the society including media and school curriculum. Traditional heterosexual oriented social norms persist and act as social pressure which do not accommodate diverse sexual expressions and single status.

Military expenses have increased in the region over the years with women's voices continuing to be absent in peace and security dialogue. Women human rights defenders face increasing oppression ranging from threats and harassment to detention without judicial trial.

Government accountability needs to be strengthened so that legislation and policy are gender sensitive and reflect unequal power balances.

## **Pacific**

The women and girls of the Pacific face great challenges, some of which are common to the Asia and Pacific region, while others are particular to the Pacific sub-region. Violence against women is a deep-rooted problem in many countries in the Pacific. The instability of governments, extractive industries and domination by corporation all have profound, long-lasting, and multifaceted impact of the lives of women and girls. Climate change remains a continuous battle for these countries and the women that call the Pacific their home.

We urge Pacific governments to increase efforts in addressing violence against all women. Governments should ensure that all women and girls have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services, including comprehensive sexuality education. We also see a dire need to intensify efforts in climate change and disaster risk management, particularly in alleviating the impact faced by women and girls in the Pacific.

Political participation of women in the Pacific sub region is low and the forum calls for temporary special measures to increase women's access to parliament at all levels.

We recognize the importance to engage and work collaboratively with regional bodies, including the Pacific Youth Council, the Pacific Island Association of Non-government Organizations, the Pacific Young Women Leadership Alliance, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Women Crisis Center, and the Pacific Network on Violence against Women, among others. We, as civil society, must advocate and work with governments to advance the rights of women and girls in the Pacific, ensuring that governments are held accountable to the commitments they make nationally and regionally. We must also strive to ensure that the messages transpiring at these platforms are brought back to the community, translated into native languages, so that the community, as a whole, can hold governments accountable for the promises they have made.

### **Southeast Asia**

Women and girls, including women with transgender experience in Southeast Asia have multiple, urgent priorities that need to be addressed. They include: poverty; women's health, sexual & reproductive rights including HIV, infant mortality, early marriage & teenage pregnancy; access to justice especially in relation to minority rights; the rise of religious fundamentalism; a lack of accountability of state and corporations; the protection of women in the informal sector; migrant workers rights; militarisation and human security; women's underrepresentation in legislature; women's land rights; the lack of protection of women human right defenders (this relates to land grabbing (Cambodia) & fundamentalism (Malaysia)); violence against women and girls, violence against women and girls of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities; high unemployment; sex stereotypes of women in media; creating space for girls and young women's voices; monitoring implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which should include women's rights organisations

We recognize the need to work more systematically and in a synergistic way with the many international mechanisms, taking a cohesive view of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other relevant conventions and treaties and interlinking all the reports with a single frame of reference. This must be accompanied by all the different civil society organizations (CSO) working together to promote human rights comprehensively recognising the indivisibility of rights.

We urge governments to fully include civil society consultation in national and international processes, and to be transparent in national reporting and provide access to comprehensive, disaggregated data.

### **Central Asia**

Central Asian States such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan manifested their political commitment to gender equality and women's rights. These States ratified international conventions and reformed domestic laws, however, gaps remain for the realization of women's rights within the Central Asian sub-

region. Political will was neither supported nor confirmed with an adequate mechanism of implementation, financing, and accountability. State promises were not translated into funding support.

There are plans to actively engage with all consultation and review processes at country, regional and international levels on Beijing+20, Sustainable Development Goals and post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. Central Asian States achieved progress in many of the important critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

We call on governments in the Central Asian Region to sustain the achievements made already in our countries and continue to support national gender equality plans; women's full participation in decision-making; sustain work on ending violence against women and girls; including specific practices such as bride-kidnapping, early and forced marriages; sustain work on women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, particularly of rural women; ensure women's equal access to resources including land and funding towards an intergenerational social, cultural, development, environmental, economic, civil and political rights and justice; sustain work on increasing rural women's access to water, sanitation, energy, food security, credit at affordable interest rates; provide support to address the emerging challenges of climate change and disaster risk reduction, but also of increasing fundamentalism; invest in women's and girls rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights; and to recognize the role of women in development of peace and security, and provide adequate funding for participation and building capacity of women as peace makers.

We call on Central Asian governments to remove all legislations that restricts NGO participation in advancing human rights and to put in place laws and policies to advance gender equality and women's rights.

## **CONCLUSION**

We, the women of Asia and the Pacific, recognise and celebrate the contributions of feminist and women's rights organisations to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. We further recognise the broader role played by these organisations in advancing our aspirations for societies that are free of poverty, violence, conflict and discrimination against women. We are committed to continuing to strive for these goals through the pursuit of movement-building, solidarity, democratic processes, and respect for our diversity and our equality.