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**FOURTH WORLD
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN**

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GENERAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS:

SECOND REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF WOMEN TO THE YEAR 2000

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF REGIONAL PREPARATORY
CONFERENCES

NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS

Letter dated 2 September 1995 from the Chairperson of the Fourth
Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries Devoted to the
Role of Women in Development addressed to the Secretary-General

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Fourth Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries Devoted to the Role of Women in Development (NAM Conference), held in Beijing on 1 September 1995 has been concluded successfully. The Conference has adopted the NAM message to the Fourth World Conference on Women (see annex), which in its essence reaffirms the political resolve of the Non-Aligned Movement to ensure the advancement of women in achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.

As requested by the NAM Conference, I would like to request that the message be circulated as an official document of the Fourth World Conference on Women for its consideration.

I also have the honour to express, on behalf of the Fourth Ministerial Conference on my own behalf, our deep appreciation to you for your assistance in making the NAM Conference in Beijing possible.

(Signed) Mien SUGANDHI
Chairperson, Fourth Ministerial Conference
of Non-Aligned Countries Devoted to the
Role of Women in Development
State Minister for the Role of Women
of the Republic of Indonesia

Annex

MESSAGE OF THE FOURTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF NON-ALIGNED
COUNTRIES DEVOTED TO THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

1. We, the Ministers of the Non-Aligned Countries, have gathered in Beijing, on the eve of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace in order to express the will of our Governments to work constructively and make a firm political commitment towards the adoption of a Platform for Action that establishes the priority actions to be carried out in the five years before the new century, in order to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

2. We reaffirm our political resolve to ensure the advancement of women, our commitment to equality between women and men as a matter of human rights and a condition for economic and social justice, and our conviction that women's full and equal participation in all the spheres of society is a prerequisite for equality, development and peace. We also urge that effective actions be taken for the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women and for their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights.

3. We acknowledge the progress that, though unsatisfactory, the international community has made in the search for equality between women and men and the advancement of women. None the less, we express our deep concern over the critical situation of deprivation in which the great majority of the women of the world live in the developing countries, particularly in the least developed countries and the countries of Africa, and our belief that the Beijing Conference provides the great opportunity for the international community to leap forward by decisively committing itself to change and to achieving rapid and effective implementation of its Platform for Action.

4. We observe that despite the bright promise and expectations for revitalizing development as a consequence of recent economic and political changes in the post-cold-war era, the results so far have proved to be disappointing due to the prevalence of an unfavourable economic environment. The gap between the rich and the poor nations continues to widen and the negative impact of changes has been stronger on women, particularly those of the developing countries.

5. We affirm that only an international environment conducive to development and peace can guarantee the achievement of equality between women and men. Although the obstacles and difficulties faced by women have similar and common characteristics, their manifestation may differ in relationship to the level of development and other factors. Women of the developing countries carry a disproportionate burden of the afflictions to which contemporary women are subject, and the obstacles to their advancement go hand in hand with the difficulties that our countries face in dealing with the problems of poverty, violence and underdevelopment.

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6. Therefore, it is imperative that in the implementation of the Platform for Action special attention is paid to the deep-seated obstacles that hinder progress - namely, poverty and lack of access to education, health care and decision-making.

7. Women constitute the majority of the more than one billion people living in poverty. Poverty has, among others, structural causes of both a national and international nature that need to be addressed through democratic participation and profound changes in economic structures in order to ensure the access of all women, in particular women in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services, and not only through humanitarian aid and anti-poverty programmes which address women merely as beneficiaries of development. We thus consider it of the greatest importance that the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women constitutes the first critical area of concern of the Platform for Action, as an unequivocal message of the urgency with which this scourge must be viewed and eradicated.

8. Illiteracy remains one of the fundamental impediments to the advancement of women and to development, as females make up more than 70 per cent of illiterate people. Lack of education continues to feed the vicious circle of women's exclusion from the mainstream of social, economic and political processes, consequentially limiting their options. Basic formal and informal education for girls and life-long education and training for women is a right, and investing in it, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and sustained economic growth.

9. Women have the right to enjoy the highest possible level of physical and mental health. Although the highest priority for developing countries must be to increase the access of women to basic health services, it should be acknowledged that solutions require a broad approach since women's health is affected by social, political, economic and environmental factors.

10. We express our strongest condemnation of all forms of violence against women and reiterate our commitment to preventing, investigating and punishing all such acts, and to giving support and assistance to all individuals and all groups particularly vulnerable to violence. In this regard, we also express our deep concern over the immense suffering to which women of different regions of the world are being subjected, many times to a greater degree than men, as a result of emerging or recently exacerbated forms of conflict and manifestations of violence and discrimination. The particularly cruel, massive and complex nature of these conflicts requires new and urgent approaches by the international community in order to combat both their unfolding and root causes. In this context, we reiterate the need to embrace the principles and implement the actions envisaged in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as the Final Document of the Jakarta Summit and relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and we urge the Beijing Conference specifically to address all forms of violence against women and girls.

11. We reaffirm that the international community should take the necessary steps to enhance cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism, which aims at the

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violation of human rights and impacts negatively on women and girls, as enunciated, inter alia, in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

12. We reaffirm the right of all peoples to self-determination, in particular, peoples under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, as enunciated, inter alia, in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. In this context, we also reaffirm our commitment to the protection of these rights of women and girls.

13. We urge our Movement to advance in the process of promoting equal access by women to decision-making positions in all fields and at all levels. The present situation of women's participation in political life in developing countries 10 years after the end of the United Nations Decade for Women, requires our urgent attention and most serious commitment to change. We view the fact that in four non-aligned nations, women are presiding over the destinies of their countries in their capacity as Head of State or Government, as a positive and encouraging signal of change.

14. We affirm that the role of our Governments is fundamental for the efforts directed to the advancement of women and express our commitment to reinforcing public initiatives more widely and vigorously in this field. We also affirm that issues pertaining to social development cannot be left to the forces of the market. These continue to be the primary responsibility of Governments, as well as of the international community. It is imperative to apply a gender perspective in the formulation of policy and programmes and to elaborate national plans that are applicable at all levels and that can be periodically reviewed, for the implementation of the actions called for in the Platform for Action, specifying the respective responsibilities of the different sectors and actors of development.

15. The uneven results achieved in the fulfilment of the targets of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies have demonstrated the critical importance of providing adequate means to make the proposed objectives a reality. Success in implementing the Platform for Action cannot be achieved unless the international community reinforces national efforts, especially by making available new and additional resources. We therefore urge States and international financial institutions participating in the Conference to include in the Platform for Action the institutional and financial means that can make its concrete implementation viable.

16. We note the role played by the United Nations in the quest for the advancement of women. Its contribution, as well as that of its agencies and of the international financial and development institutions, will be important for success in achieving the objectives of the Conference. We consider it necessary that impetus be given to the process of widening the participation of women within the United Nations, especially those from developing countries, to achieve equitable geographical representation, with an emphasis on decision-making posts. The United Nations should serve as an example to States and to the international and regional institutions.

17. We recognize and support the work of the non-governmental organizations in the impetus given to the cause of the advancement of women. Their work in

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assisting developing countries in the implementation of their national plans must continue, bearing in mind that Governments have the principal responsibility for development in their respective countries.

18. We call upon the States that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

19. We express our commitment to the ratification and full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and call upon States to take the necessary measures for the survival, protection and development of the girl-child.

20. We note that the views and recommendations from the declarations of the previous Non-Aligned Ministerial Conferences on Women in Development, especially the Third Conference, held in Havana, Cuba, in 1990, continue to guide our positions. Equally, the criteria stemming from the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen should assist us in the conception and implementation of the Platform for Action.

21. We express our full support to the Group of 77 in its task of representing the developing world during the negotiations of the Fourth World Conference on Women and reiterate that the negotiations should be based on genuine interdependence, mutuality of interests and benefits and shared responsibilities.

22. We therefore firmly commit ourselves to achieving the goals of equality, development and peace, and to the removal of all obstacles to women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life.
